THE DIVERSITY AND STRENGTH OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, FEBRUARY 25, 1986

Printed for the use of the
Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
60-802 O WASHINGTON : 1986

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office
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H961-26

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THE DIVERSITY AND STRENGTH OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1986

House of Representatives,
Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:35 a.m., in room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. George Miller (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Miller, Schroeder, Boggs, Boxer, Levin, Sikorski, Coats, Fish, Bliley, Wolf, Johnson, and Smith.

Staff present: Ann Rosewater, deputy staff director; Karabelle Pizzigati, professional staff; Mark Souder, minority staff director, and Joan Godley, committee clerk.

Chairman Miller. The Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families will come to order for the purposes of conducting a hearing on the diversity and the strength of American families.

Every American family holds common goals for their children. They want them to be born and grow up healthy, to gain an education, and to become productive adults. They want them to be free from harm, and to have an equal chance to fulfill their aspirations.

This is true regardless of family income, whether the family is headed by two parents or a single parent, whether both or only one parent is employed, whether the parents are well educated or not so well educated.

Families achieve these goals for themselves and their children in a variety of ways. To achieve their goals, most families can and do use a little help—whether from friends or extended family, from churches or child care workers, from doctors or teachers, neighbors, or employers. Most use a combination of these supports, in varying intensity, at different stages of their family's lifespan.

Today, in our continuing investigation of the conditions and trends affecting American families, the select committee will examine the diversity of today's families, how families have changed, and how these changes affect family functioning. We will also look at the newest approaches to helping diverse families adjust to the changing economic, social, and cultural pressures that they face.

As is the select committee's tradition, we will hear from researchers who have charted family changes over recent decades, from clinicians who work directly with families and children, and from families themselves.

We look forward to an illuminating hearing which will contribute to our understanding on how to make policy and design supports which reflect the contemporary needs of American families.

At this time I would like to recognize the ranking minority member of the committee, Congressman Dan Coats.

Mr. Coats. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased that you have convened a hearing on—the subject of family strengths. I think the subject was initially suggested by Congressman Wolf a couple of years ago, and his persistence in pursuing that theme has brought us to this point. I want to thank him for that even though he is not here yet.

Why family strengths? Why are we looking at what makes families work?

This committee has rightfully looked at a number of problems that exist among our children, youth, and families. We have collected an impressive amount of data regarding the condition of our children, youth, and families across the country. And we have looked at and targeted strategies for dealing with these problems.

But I think all of us on the panel agree that—an ounce of prevention—is worth a pound of cure. If we can somehow break the chain and keep the problem from happening, or happening in the degree that it is now happening, in the first place, we will not only save a great deal of money, but we will do children, youth, and families a great service.

It is somewhat analogous to the situation of standing along a riverbank and watching a person floundering in the current. We jump in and try to pull that person on the shore and revive him. We do the best we can to revive him only to find that someone else is in the current struggling. And that is repeated, and repeated, and finally someone says, "Maybe we ought to go upstream and see if we can determine why they are falling in the river."

I think the hearing on family strengths is going upstream to find out what is happening—what we can do to prevent it.

If we can define family strengths, those characteristics that make families work, then perhaps we can incorporate some of these strategies in our policies to deal with the problems that we face.

All families have problems. All families have strengths and weaknesses. Suburban families in affluent communities have problems—significant problems. Poor urban minority families have strengths. And there are families in the worst of circumstances that succeed, and families in the best of circumstances that fail.

We need to find out common characteristics, if it is possible, and identify those characteristics attributed to the success of diverse families, and then incorporate those strengths in making our policy.

This morning I am looking forward to the testimony of the witnesses that will appear before us, and particularly their emphasis on common characteristics or strengths that they find within families, so that we can identify those characteristics and strengths and apply them to policy.

I look forward to the hearing. I would ask, as is customary, that the record be kept open for the opening statements of those members that are not yet here. And for submission of additional material.

Chairman MILLER. Congresswoman Boggs.

Mrs. BOGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank all of you who are here this morning, especially those of you who will appear as witnesses. This committee is very grateful for the magnificent response that we enjoy from people who are interested in children, youth, and families.

As a member of a family that has had various kinds of experiences over a long period of years, I am especially pleased that we are going to show the strength of families and to hope that we can suggest a replication of their success stories to other families and to other areas of the country where these particular families may not live.

I am very pleased that among the witnesses today is a family who will be talking about families who have stepchildren and stepparents within them.

My father died when I was 2½. I spent a great deal of time in my grandparents' homes and then was privileged to have a stepfather by the time I was 5½. My relationship with him and his family is something that I have cherished through the years. I think it was made possible because he remained close to my father's family and insisted that I do as well.

There is always a searching among children who have an absent parent, and they wish very much to be identified with that parent, to know who they are, and to be able to be a part of that family as well. It is this great support system from all areas of a combined family that make a child feel stable and secure and beloved.

I am certain that we will find a stream of that theme going through the testimony this morning, whether it comes from families or from the experts in the field of family living.

So I thank all of you for being with us and sharing with us so that we can hopefully share with the rest of the country.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Congressman Bliley.

Mr. BLILEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am happy to be here at this hearing to discuss the diversity and strengths of American families. I have long had my own theories, as no doubt all of us have, about what makes a family strong. My thoughts are based on my own experiences and the lives of people that I have known. However, I do not claim to be an expert so I am particularly interested in hearing the conclusions of those who have studied family strengths on a large scale and in a scientific manner.

This hearing is a new approach by the select committee in looking at the needs of families. I am confident that the testimony we will hear today will better enable us to look at programs and policies in light of whether or not they cooperate with family strengths. It is not sufficient to judge the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of programs solely by the result they have for categories of individuals. People do not live in categories; they live in families.

Consequently, we must see what the ultimate impact is on the family. I believe unity is one of the principal features of a strong family. Unity is the difference between a group of related persons with responsibilities and concerns for one another, and a group of individuals who share a name but little else. Unity can come from different sources and through different means.

I hope to gain from this hearing a better understanding of the elements which contribute to family unity and, beyond that, which make families healthy environments for the emotional, physical, and spiritual growth of children and parents.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Congresswoman Boxer.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. Chairman, I have no opening statement. I am just very pleased to be here and am looking forward to the testimony.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Congressman Sikorski.

Mr. SIKORSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, join in with all who commend the committee for having this hearing on the diversity and strength of American families, and am especially pleased that David Olson, a professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota, is on the third panel. He grew up in southern Minnesota, is a psychologist by training, and has always specialized in working with couples and families. He heads up the family social science doctoral program at the University of Minnesota; developed workshops for couples who are thinking about marriage, and for families in stress. His main thrust has been the importance of viewing and working with the family as a whole. He has spent his career studying family systems and developing therapy models which recognize the importance of the family unit.

I thank him for coming this morning, and thank you for having the hearing.

Chairman MILLER. Congressman Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for having the hearing, and a special thanks to Congressman Coats for staying with and pursuing this idea.

I am pleased that the Children, Youth, and Families Committee is having this hearing on healthy families. Often, it seems, particularly with this committee, we deal with what is wrong, with things after they have reached a crisis proportion. Then in this crisis situation we devise programs to try to cope with the situation. We don't seem to step back often enough and look at how families can work out their personal problems before they reach the crisis stage.

Last year, I had urged members of this committee to read a book by Dolores Curran called "Traits of a Healthy Family" to introduce them to the idea of healthy families research.

In response to her research, one survey respondent, a pediatrician, put it this way:

> At first, certain families stand out. After a few years, you realize certain characteristics stand out. And then, many families later, you connect the two and watch for those traits in good families. They are usually there.

Her research, involving professionals who work with families from all over the country—liberals, conservatives, moderates, and every different type you can think of, identified 15 characteristics of healthy families, and I want to read what they are: First, communicates and listens; second, affirms and supports one another—doesn't tear each other down, but supports and affirms one another; third, teaches respect for others; fourth, develops a sense of trust; fifth, has a sense of play and humor; sixth, exhibits a sense of shared responsibility; seventh, teaches a sense of right and wrong—that there is a right and there is a wrong and everything just kind of do whatever you feel you ought to do at that moment—but there is a right and there is a wrong; eighth, has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound; ninth, has a balance of interaction among members; tenth, this is one we never really hear anyone talk about—has a shared religious core; eleventh, respects the privacy of one another; twelfth, values service to others; thirteenth, fosters family table time and conversation—you know there's time you sit around the table with your kids and just talk about what did you do today, what did they do today; fourteenth, shares leisure time—takes vacations together. You know, they realize it is OK for a father to take a vacation once or twice a year. You don't have to be a macho 52-week man work type; and fifteenth, last, admits to and seeks help with problems.

I am sure some of you today will correctly point out the changes in family composition. Those of us in Government also perceive and generally understand those changes. However, the larger question is this: Are there indeed particular family strengths discovered in the research? And what are the implications of those strengths for U.S. policymakers and for families in general?

There are identifiable strengths, family strengths which give those in and out of Government a standard to pursue. Without the application of such a standard to strengthen American families, we are likely to continue to see an increase in the serious problems this committee deals with almost on a daily basis.

Dolores Curran could not be with us today. However, I have asked her to submit written testimony for the hearing record and urge the committee to review her remarks.

I also hope that each of you testifying today will assist us in identifying traits of healthy families so we can begin to explore how to prevent problems from reaching the crisis level.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and Congressman Coats, the ranking member.

Chairman **Miller**. Thank you.

Congresswoman Johnson.

Mrs. **Johnson**. Yes, just very briefly I would like to say that most of us sitting here have found our own parenting skills developed over the years through reflection and through study. Developing a healthy family isn't a matter of luck—it is something that you make happen. Likewise, developing public policy that supports and encourages the growth of strong families isn't something that just happens, it is something that we have to make happen. You can only make it happen with information and with reflection. Too often we look at the problems but we don't look at the successes, so we don't draw on that body of experience, reflection, and dedication that can guide us to developing public policies that overcome weaknesses and develop strengths.

I, too, would like to commend the chairman on holding this hearing, and commend my colleague, Congressman Coats, for his determination to pursue this subject, for the light that it can shed on public policies—which are very much needed to strengthen healthy families in America.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Congressman Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to be here this morning.

The only comment that I would have is that I hope that the people who set the agenda in the House of Representatives will take note of this hearing today, and have a little more consideration for the families of Members of Congress. The long hours we put in around here, and the times we get home at night are never taken into consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. To say nothing of having the Easter break when our children are out of school. Other than that, it is fine.

Thank you very much.

We will now hear from our first panel which is a panel made up of Ginger and Herb Davis, and their children, Kate and John. They reside in Silver Spring, MD.

And Josephine and Lynwood Earl Horne, and their daughter, Delphina Lynette Horne, a family from Camp Springs, MD.

If you will come forward here and take your place at the witness table. Don't be nervous. This is a very relaxed committee. We are here to listen to you. We will start with Ginger and Herb Davis. If you have prepared testimony, it will be put in the record in its entirety and you can either read it or you can paraphrase, and summarize it in the manner in which you are most comfortable. Just proceed in any manner you would like here.

STATEMENT OF HERB DAVIS, SILVER SPRING, MD

Mr. HERB DAVIS. I guess we are on first. First, I would like to introduce the Davis-Richmond family. I am Herb Davis, this is my wife, Ginger; my stepdaughter, Kate Richmond, and my stepson, John Richmond.

We have been married since December 1976, so we have been married a little over 9 years. We moved to the Washington area, living in Silver Spring, since May 1978. I have three children from a previous marriage who are now 27, 25, and 21, and I have one granddaughter who is 2½.

We have all heard that the mortality rate for second marriages is slightly greater than that for first marriages. Just briefly, I believe that we have survived—but more than that, we have thrived. I feel personally as an individual that I have thrived in the relationship.

I think that stepfamilies have much more complexity than what we will call normal or natural families. Beside the good parts, like Kate and John having four sets of grandparents to send them gifts, we also end up with four sets of grandparents who could bring problems—we end up with many more relationships that increase the complexity.

I think that what one learns is that flexibility is necessary. First of all, being able to understand the complexity, I think is the first step, and then learning to become flexible enough to maybe deal with family issues in a nontraditional manner that comes about because of the special relationships that exist when you have children in a home who have more than one father—a father in the home and a biological father.

Ginger has prepared some comments to make regarding our view of the strengths, and I am going to turn the testimony over to her now.

STATEMENT OF GINGER DAVIS, SILVER SPRING, MD

Mrs. GINGER DAVIS. We understand that you would like to hear about basically what has kept us together for 9 years. We could go on forever about the challenges we have faced. When Herb and I were talking about what in particular has kept us together—as with many families that make it, some of the characteristics, I think, are generic, and many are those that you have mentioned, Congressman Wolf.

In particular, for Herb and I we have had some good things going for us that I don't want to sound self-serving about but they are peculiar to us, they are not specific—they don't belong just to us, but we have them and we are lucky.

One of them is we fell in love real hard almost 11 years ago. It has been something that has kept us together through some very difficult times. Like many stepfamilies, we have been to the edge more than once, and we have availed ourselves of professional help when we felt that that was necessary over the years.

So our own relationship, the basis of it was good, and has continued there—fluctuating, but it has been there.

Another very strong thing, I think, especially on my part, is something I am very conscious of, is a very deep devotion to the concept of family. I want to raise my children in a family. My son was a couple weeks old and my daughter was just 3 when my first marriage broke up. And since for most of my 40 years, I have been a step something—a stepchild since I was 2½, and now a stepmother for 9 years.

The idea has already been strong in me to have a family that had two parents in it, so I was very lucky to meet and fall in love with Herb and marry 2½ years after my separation.

Again, not to sound self-serving, but Herb and I take this job seriously and we like to think that we have some maturity in us that has helped. It is not easy—it is a difficult job. We have had a lot going for us from within ourselves, and a lot from with outside. We do live in a culture where family is valued. That has been helpful. Our families have been very supportive of the second marriages.

Herb is Jewish—I am not. When I first met his mother, who lives with his sister in an orthodox home—and my first husband was my minister's son, and former president of the youth group. I mean, I didn't know how this was all going to work. We got to the front door, and I had been practicing the whole trip—you know, do I call her mom? Do I call her Mrs. Davis? Is it Martha, or what do I do? I was 31 years old. We get to the front door. She opens the door, "Ginger"—big kiss, hug. So we have been very lucky.

My parents have also been very supportive when we were married.

I think we are conscious of our roles as models for all five of our children. When we were married, these kids ranged from 2½ to 18. We got married the middle of December, during Christmas break, of course. We had to find some time when the kids were all available. We figured that starting the next month when his daughter started college—she graduated a semester early—that we would have kids in college for 20 solid years, with 3 years off at one point.

Our friends have been supportive. That has been very important to us. We have actively cultivated friends. I have sought out people, and I think Herb has, wherever possible—people like us, who are stepfamilies.

We belong to an organization that started some 7 or 8 years ago, called the Stepfamily Association of America. It was started by a couple that have been married almost 30 years—a psychologist and a psychiatrist in California. I am president of the Montgomery County Chapter this year.

We get a lot of strength out of giving. At this point in our relationship we have enough energy left over to give to other stepfamilies. Whenever we have problems still, that group helps us.

I guess what I am trying to say is that this is a very active quest. I don't imagine in any family that stability and cohesiveness comes easy. I take that back—there are probably some where it comes easy. I don't know too many of them. We work hard at it, and we enjoy our triumphs.

One other thing Herb and I have talked about that has been a major strength for us is money. It is very simple. We have always had enough money—the basics we have always had. We can put five children through college somehow. My child support has been regular every month. My exhusband has been stable. That has been something we can count on. Herb has been able to support his children, and to a large extent mine. I also work part time, and have ever since my son was born. We both work in high-paying professions, so we have been fortunate.

That pretty well sums it up.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Did Kate or John want to testify? You just came here to get out of school? [Laughter.]

Mr. HERB DAVIS. I would like to add that I did tell the kids that if we were done early, their school is opening 2 hours late today, so they can still make it.

Chairman MILLER. John, this is where you learn to filibuster. You can stay out of school if you keep talking.

[Prepared statement of Herb and Ginger Davis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HERB AND GINGER DAVIS, SILVER SPRING, MD

Thank you for your invitation to us to come and tell you our story, and through us, the story of stepfamilies.

We are Herb and Ginger Davis of Silver Spring, MD. We live with my fourteen year old daughter, Kate, and my eleven year old son, John. Their last name is Richmond. We moved here eight years ago from Bloomington, IN where we met and married nine years ago. Herb is fifty and I am forty. We've both been married once before. Herb has three children. Leslie is twenty-seven and lives in Arizona with her husband. Steve, who lived with us the first three and a half years of our marriage, is twenty-five and lives in Laurel, MD with his wife, my former babysitter, and their daughter, our grand-daughter. And Herb's youngest is twenty-one year old Elizabeth who lives and goes to school in Indiana. When we married after a year and a half courtship, our five children ranged in age from two and a half to eighteen, and we figured out that if all kids went to college on time, and for four years, starting the month we married we'd have kids in college for twenty years straight with only three years off between his youngest and my oldest.

We also figured that we'd just have the best old time now that we were one, big family. After all, Herb and I were very much in love, we were consciously looking forward to having a family again, we wanted our kids as much in our lives as possible, and we were bright, educated, motivated people. We even had enough money to not really have to be concerned about basic security, so we figured our travails were over. We'd made it through the devastation of unwanted divorces, and now we were ready to walk into the sunset, arm in arm, with our five wonderful kids toddling, walking, and striding right up there with us.

Boy were we naive.

We are grateful for the opportunity to speak with you because we feel passionately about the issues stepfamilies contend with. One in six of America's children currently lives in a stepfamily, and 50% will before they are eighteen. My own perspective is that of nearly forty years of being a stepchild, nearly a decade of being a stepmother to three, and nearly fifteen years of being the mother to two who are themselves the stepchildren of my current husband and my exhusband's wife. Too, I am currently President of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Stepfamily Association of America, a seven year old national organization of several thousand stepfamilies and other interested persons. And finally, my perspective is colored by my being a licensed social worker working parttime on a PhD in social work, planning to do my thesis work on children in stepfamilies.

Stepfamilies resemble every family in many important ways. For example, we raise children, conduct marriages, pay taxes, participate in our communities, and grow and develop throughout our individual life cycles, children and parents alike.

But our story differs in significant ways too. Most of the relationships in our families are imposed on us by the marital choice. Most of our children have other parents, and even other stepparents, indeed have membership as children of two families' households. Most of our families are born of a process that began with loss—death or divorce. Often our weddings represent intense happiness and hopefulness for the spouses, but sorrow for the children as they confront the death of their very normal yearning for reconcilliation of their biological parents. All our financial and emotional resources are spread over more people. Our emotional climate tends to be more intense. Our roles ill-defined. Our lives are simply more complicated. And our stabilities cannot be taken for granted. Our successes are usually hard won, and our failures too frequent. Often the social supports available to biological families are not available or inappropriate for stepfamilies. For example, school systems often lack procedures for including all parents in the child's records, and teachers and guidance counselors often are unaware of the distinctive differences of stepfamily life, usually just assuming they're negatives for the child. Even the response of most people to addressing me as Mrs. Richmond, my children's last name, is embarrassment when I matter-of-factly point out that it's Mrs. Davis. The natural response seems to convey the message that stepfamilies are deviant families, families with an aura of illegitimacy somehow.

If you look at a successfully functioning stepfamily, you'll most likely see a man who is the husband of a woman who lived in a family unit with her biological children when he married her. You'll see his biological children visiting this new unit periodically. You'll not have to watch long before you see that the family is characterized by more activity than you're used to seeing in a family. And that'll be because there is just greater complexity to navigate there. There are more relationships, existing more intensely, and usually in varying states of comfort. You'll see conscious tolerance and studied control. On these successful families you'll probably notice a distinct tone of interpersonal respect, possibly a climate of vigilance and attentiveness to how members are getting along with each other. It's not so much that the successful stepfamily is living on the edge, as it is living in readiness and consciousness. You'll see clear separations of individuals and indications of clear understanding of each other's place in one another's lives. Most successful stepfamilies aren't created that way; they've acquired their mutual awarenesses, their functionality, their cohesiveness, their confidence and mutual respect the old fashioned way—they've earned them.

Remarriages have been called the triumph of hope over experience. Herb and I believe they are much more than that. Our own stepfamily has been the source of some of the most intense pain and pleasure we'll ever have. Some of the weaknesses of any stepfamily are inherent in the family's structure, such as sheer complexity, lack of role definitions, and weakened incest taboo. Some arise from society's myths about us, such as stepfamilies are like the Brady Bunch, or that we're populated by those "bad" divorced people. And our own individual inadequacies, such as poor parenting skills, personal immaturities, and unresolved emotional problems from past life histories, can weaken us. But some of our strengths lie in those very areas as well.

For example, in my own family, the complexity of dealing with five children whose ages span a sixteen year range and therefore present tremendous variation in developmental stages, has been both good and bad. It's exhausting to deal with children in five different developmental stages; it's expensive; and it requires parenting skills neither of us had entirely. Consequently we've had varying degrees of success at various times. The good thing about having five children is that we have them. We have five people who matter to us more than anything on earth. I personally wouldn't have chosen to have five children in my family. However, had I not fallen in love with Herb I never would have had the pleasure of having Leslie, Steve, or Liz in my life, let alone the people they've married and are going to, to say nothing of their children. Obviously, some of the benefits of living in a stepfamily are related to one's ability to see the glass half full instead of half empty.

Which brings me to endurance. Sometimes I tell people that there are two highly underrated marital skills which, I believe, are directly related to success in stepfamilies. They are endurance and damage control. Time may not heal all wounds, but it's often the best coping mechanism stepfamilies have. Some stepfamily stresses can only be endured, such as the unheavals of teenage developmental crises. Research has shown the developmental cycle of a stepfamily to differ from that of a biological family in that it can take, and usually does take, years to reach any decent level of integrated, stable functioning. Three to five years isn't unusual. You can see how important endurance can be.

Damage control is a partner to endurance in that if you want to have anything worthwhile left at the end of your stepfamily's years of major adjustment, you all had best develop real aptitude in controlling the damage done to each other. The natural desire of parents and children, and of husbands and wives to be close to each other is what usually prevails in the end in successful stepfamilies, so hanging in there in the least damaging way is imporatant. Not that endurance and damage control are all that's necessary. It's just that they seem to be especially useful to stepfamily success.

Lest that sound too negative, may I point out that stepfamily life is not the trite little picnic popularized by the Brady Bunch. Neither does it have to be like Cinderella or Dynasty. For example, the Stepfamily Association of America group we belong to meets once a month. It exists to provide companionship and support for members around the issues of stepfamilies. We draw a varied assortment of people representing the tens of millions of people like us across this country. (Great Britain and Canada have similar organizations.) We are a composite of stepfamilies in various stages of development. There's not a Brady Bunch, a Cinderella, or a Dynasty family amongst us. But there are a lot of people intensely involved in actively living their stepfamily lives. We currently plan to create a video to show on Montgomery County's new community access cable TV channel to alert our community to our existence and to raise the level of understanding within our community about stepfamilies.

SAA offers an example of how stepfamilies help each other with our problems, share our triumphs, offer hope through example, and blaze the trail for others. We try to understand what's going on in stepfamilies as we try not just to survive, but to thrive. We are very much aware of our collective status as a newly recognized, distinctive family type with distinctive characteristics. We are aware of the tendency of ourselves and of society to look at us in terms of the biological family, and therefore of our own and society's tendency to deliver an evaluative or comparative response when living in or looking at our families. We believe that our successful functioning is the result of the interaction of the strengths and weaknesses of ourselves and our society.

We are impacted by so many things. For example, by child support awarded but not paid which can cripple our families financially. Any by the stresses of cultural expectations of roles based on gender and age when we need roles based on fluctuating tolerances of individuals who may not even have mutually accepted their sudden relatedness.

We are grateful we live in a time when, by virtue of sheer numbers, we are given some legitimacy as families. And it doesn't hurt that President Reagan's family is a stepfamily, that Vice President Bush's wife is a stepchild, and that other high profile people like Phil Donahue and Marlo Thomas, and Dr. Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan, live in stepfamilies.

Stepfamilies are complex systems. These brief remarks can't adequately convey that. There are excellent books and articles available should you be interested. I've listed just a few below.

Herb and I thank you for the opportunity to tell you something about us and stepfamilies in general. We'd like to reciprocate by inviting you to one of our monthly SAA meetings and/or to visit our family in action so to speak. We're rather proud of it.

Chairman MILLER. All right. Next we will hear from the Hornes.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPHINE HORNE, CAMP SPRINGS, MD

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. My name is Josephine Horne. This is my husband, Lynwood Earl Horne, and my daughter, Delphina Lynette Horne.

I won't pretend not to be nervous, I am.

We made note of what we consider the most critical points in our lives. This is what we would like to say to you today.

We are very honored that we were given the opportunity to testify before this select committee.

We grew up on a farm in Pitt County, NC, and were married right after high school. We knew our parents could not afford to send us to college, so approximately 3 months after we were married, we moved to Washington and lived with relatives until we could afford a place of our own.

Lynwood got a job at a cafeteria, and although his salary was very small, we immediately started a savings account. We felt that this was something that we had to do.

We had been living in our apartment about 6 months when a family member back home became ill, and we were asked to go back home to help out with summer crops, which we did.

About 4 months later, we were on our way back to Washington because there weren't any jobs in North Carolina for us. However, we were in the same situation as when we were first married. We had no money, we had no jobs, and no place to stay. We lived with our relatives until we could afford a place of our own.

By now I had decided that if I was going to get a good job I had to go back to school. Lynwood had worked for Safeway during one summer vacation and had decided that he wanted a career with them. Although he had not been able to get that job since we came to Washington, he was determined to do so. Meanwhile, he was working at a hotel and I was working as a food clerk, and going to school at night.

I had taken the Civil Service test and thought I would immediately get a job with the Federal Government. However, every place I went they said there were no positions available. So I took a job as a clerk with a drycleaning store and waited to hear from them.

About 6 months later, I did get an offer of a position with the Federal Government. I took the job, even though it meant a cut in pay, because I knew we wanted children and I thought my chances for working and raising a family would be better with the Federal Government since you could earn sick leave and annual leave.

By this time, Lynwood had been hired by Safeway stores, as he was resolved to do. I was continuing with school because I needed more education if I was going to advance in the work that I had attained in the Federal Government. We were both getting promotions on our jobs so we thought it was now time to start our family and look for a home to purchase.

Sadly, we lost our first child. The child died when I was in my sixth month pregnancy. The doctors really didn't say why. I felt it was due to inadequate prenatal care. We could not afford a private doctor, so I went to the clinic. Each time I went I saw a different doctor.

So by the time I got pregnant again, because of the fringe benefits of Lyn's job at Safeway, we were able to afford a private doctor. Through a great deal of struggle and good care from the doctor, we did have a baby girl this time around. By the time she was 18 months old, we were able to afford a house of our own.

At this time another serious problem began to confront us—obtaining good child care for our daughter. The relatives in the area was very few, and could not help us with child care as they needed to work themselves. We needed both incomes so I had to go back to work. At first, we had several babysitters, but none of them gave her the care that we wanted for her.

Some of the situations we encountered were very distressing. One evening we picked up her, and the sitter decided to give her a haircut. This time she was only 9 months—there's a soft spot on her head, and I was just frantic thinking about scissors going through that spot.

Sometimes we would pick her up and she was so hoarse from crying that she couldn't even talk, or her bottom was sore from wearing wet diapers all day. So we decided that we could not trust this arrangement any longer.

I went on extended leave and was seriously considering giving my resignation. Fortunately, we found a licensed nursery school that cared for small babies if they were potty-trained and at least 2 years of age. She was only 18 months but she was trained so they accepted her, and I was able to go back to work—peace of mind, actually.

Because we needed afterschool care, we left her in the private schools actually from 18 months until just now, because they provided afterschool care for her. She left school at 2:30 p.m. she was able to go to another part of the school and stay there until at least 6 or 6:30 in the evening until we were able to pick her up.

About 3 years ago, we were able to sell the first home that we bought and buy the house we dreamed of outside the city. This decision brought about new problems because our daughter was already settled in high school, she understandably did not want to change schools, and we felt it might set her back if she did. So even though she drives herself to school now, initially we drove her some 40 miles round trip each day—got to work on time ourselves and then picked her up in the afternoon. We are very proud of her.

She is graduating from high school this year and has been accepted into college.

We are both now in a field that we wanted for ourselves. Lynwood wanted to work in produce, and is now a produce manager with Safeway. I wanted a career with the IRS, but am happy in the transportation field.

We feel that even though all our goals are not met, we are satisfied and we will continue to set new goals even after we conquer the old ones, because we feel that there is always room for improvement.

In closing, I would just like to say that we could not have gone through and overcome even one-third of the struggles that we confronted without the help of our family, friends, relatives, the church—strangers in some cases. They were all quite helpful.

Thank you.

[Prepared Statement of Josephine Horne Lynwood Earl Horne, and Delphina Lynette Horne, Camp Springs, MD, follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSEPHINE HORNE, LYNWOOD EARL HORNE, AND DELPHINA LYNETTE HORNE, CAMP SPRINGS, MD

I am Josephine Horne. With me are my husband, Lynwood Earl and our daughter, Delphina Lynette.

We grew up on a farm. Our parents were sharecroppers. We had the basic necessities, such as shelter, food and clothing, but nothing extra, as it was not easy to maintain even the basic necessities. We raised or grew 90% of what we ate, and most of our clothes were made at home. However, we needed money to buy the materials for the clothes, seeds for the vegetables, and the baby chicklets and pigs that would be fattened for meat. Money was not easy to come by, since farmers were only paid in the fall of the year, when crops were harvested and sold. Sometimes there was a little money left after expenses; sometimes there was not.

We were married at an early age, right after high school. We knew our parents did not have money to send us to college, and we decided we would have to take off on our own, and do the best that we could. We had several things working for us: We had been taught to believe in God and never forget to pray; we believed in ourselves; we didn't mind doing a hard day's work; and most of all, we loved each other.

Approximately three months after we were married, we moved from North Carolina to Washington, D.C. and lived with relatives until we could afford a place of our own. In about three months we did move into a small place of our own. It was not elaborate, but we felt good about it because it was our first home.

Lynwood was working at a cafeteria then. Although his earnings were very small, we immediately started a savings account, and we always thought of our savings as if it was a bill to be paid. We budgeted our money so that we paid ourselves as well as the bills.

We had been living in our apartment for about six months, when Lynwood's mother became ill, and we were asked to come home and help out until she was better. We went back to North Carolina for a brief stay because we were raised to believe that if one family member was in need of help, then everyone must help out. About four months later we were on our way back to Washington, because we knew there was nothing for us there in North Carolina. We were then in the same situation as before. We had no money and no place to stay. So we stayed with relatives again until we could afford to move. Things were not easy for us. The only things that kept us going were our love for each other and an occasional trip back home to visit our families.

By now I had decided that if I was going to get a good job, I had to go back to school. Lynwood worked for Safeway stores during one summer vacation and decided that he wanted a career with them. Although he had not yet been able to get a job with them, he was determined to do so. Meanwhile he was working at a hotel, and I was working as a food clerk and going to school at night. By now I had taken the civil service test, and thought for sure I would get a job immediately with the government. However, every place I went, I was told that there was no position available. So I got a job as a clerk in a dry cleaning store and waited.

After I had been there for about six months, I got an offer of a position with the federal government. I took the job, even though it meant a cut in pay, because we wanted to have children as soon as we could afford to, and I felt my chances of raising a family and working would be better if I was working for the government. You could earn sick leave and annual leave working for the government. By this time, Lynwood had started to work for Safeway stores, as he was resolved to do. I was continuing with school because I felt I needed more education if I was going to be able to advance in my work.

We both began to get promotions on our jobs, and we had a pretty decent apartment. We thought it was time to start our family and look for a home to purchase.

Before coming to Washington, we had never seen an apartment. We really didn't know what to think of it. We thought of a home as a single house where you could walk out your front door and see grass rather than cement. We wanted our child to be raised in what we considered to be a home. We wanted her to have a yard to play in, and room in the house to move about freely, without disturbing people living above or below us.

We knew that in order to have this we would have to give up a lot. We could not have the car we so desperately wanted, the closes that we though we needed, or go home on more occasions than we did.

Sadly, we lost our first child. We were never told what happened. I lost the baby when I was six months pregnant. I believe it was due to inadequate prenatal care. We could not afford a private doctor, so I went to the clinic, and had to see a different doctor each visit. Afterwards, we knew we could not just give up. We pulled ourselves together and just went on.

By the time I got pregnant again, because of the fringe benefits of Lynwood's job, I was able to go to a private doctor regularly. Through a lot of struggle we had a baby girl, and by the time she was 18 months old, we were able to buy our first house.

At this time another serious problem began to confront us—obtaining good child care for our daughter. While we had some relatives in the area, we did not have many who could help us with child care. We depended on strangers to take care of our child, because we needed both incomes to make it. I had to go back to work. At first we had several babysitters, but none of them gave our child the care that we wanted for her. Some of the situations we encountered were very distressing. One evening we came home and found our child's hair cut off. We decided we just couldn't afford to trust this arrangement any longer. After going through a few more sitters, I decided to go on extended leave and was seriously considering giving my resignation.

However, we fortunately found a licensed nursery school which accepted babies at two years of age, if they were potty-trained. Our daughter was 18 months old, but she was trained, so they took her, and I was able to go back to work. We had spent all of our savings on the down payment for our house, so we had to start saving all over again. We wanted our daughter to have the best possible, so we again put aside some of the things we wanted.

Because we needed afterschool care, we left our child in private schools because they provided afterschool care for her, including summer camp each year. We wanted her to have every chance possible to make a good living when she grew up, so we also gave her every type lesson that we thought would help, including dance lessons, piano lessons, and modeling classes. We also felt that going on vacations was an important part of a child's upbringing. We felt that if she had all of these things, it would give her something to do when she grew up rather than spending time on the streets in her spare time. We also wanted a nice home so she could entertain in her own home sometimes.

We feel that the school played the second most important role in our child's life, because she was in school about as much time as she was at home. But we also believe that a child must be prepared before going to school and these lessons are taught at home.

We gave up a lot and we learned a lot right along with our child. We got to see places during our vacations that we had never seen before. We, however, never had a free Saturday because all our time was spent taking her to lessons which were given on the weekends.

We would like it to be understood that we couldn't have made it without the help of our friends, relatives, schools, and the church and, of course, our belief in God.

About three years ago we were able to sell our first home, and buy a home we both dreamed of, outside the city. This decision brought about new problems, because our daughter was already settled in high school. She understandably didn't want to change schools, and we felt it might set her back if she did. So we decided to move and let her commute. It is easier now that she drives, but initially we had to take her to school, get to work on time ourselves and pick her up in the afternoon. She will be graduating this spring, and has been accepted into college. We are not sure how those expenses will be met, and we will make new arrangements to meet them. We are very proud of our daughter and we know that every sacrifice we made has been worth it.

We are both in the career field that we wanted. Lynwood wanted to work in produce, and is now a produce manager. I wanted a career with the IRS, but am happy in the transporatation field. Even though all of our goals are not met, we are satisfied and will continue to set new goals even after we conquer the old ones, because we feel that there is always room for improvement.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Davis, you mentioned in your testimony the qualities of endurance and patience, I guess, in melding two separate families together into a single unit.

What institution outside the family did you have the most difficulty with?

Mrs. GINGER DAVIS. I don't know—no particular institution comes to mind.

Chairman MILLER. Any schools or——

Mrs. GINGER DAVIS. Those are picky things. They are pragmatic things. They have real impact. For instance, I have always taken it upon myself to make sure that the children's report cards get xeroxed and sent to their biological father, because the schools don't have procedures set up to handle that.

When I still lived in the same town—Bloomington, IN—with their biological father, I made sure he knew about conferences and had the opportunity to attend them.

When he comes for visits, he has the opportunity and he knows to visit their schools.

It is not that the institutions have anything per se for stepfamilies, so much as it is that they gain an awareness that we are out there, and that many of us expect to be able to negotiate differences with them. No particular institution at all.

Chairman MILLER. Do you find a receptivity to stepfamilies? Do you find a change over the period of years that you have been dealing with various institutions? I mean, stepfamilies are not as unique now as they were a decade ago, or two decades ago. I remember commenting to a friend, looking at the soccer schedule on the refrigerator, that none of the children and their parents had the same names.

So it is not unique. I just wondered to what extent institutions are now accommodating? Because your testimony, obviously dwells very heavily on the distinctions or the differences between stepfamilies and other families.

Mrs. GINGER DAVIS. Again, I just can't think of anything offhand——

Chairman MILLER. All right.

Mrs. GINGER DAVIS [continuing]. Except the willingness they have to deal with the individual, and the individual and the stepfamily has to have within him and herself the feeling that we may be different, but different doesn't mean better or worse. That is the general underlying tone that is out there to be met and shown by example that it isn't so.

When I run into someone who addresses me as Mrs. Richmond because they know my children and they simply expect that I am to have my children's last name, I will simply say it is Mrs. Davis, but that's all right, that is a natural assumption. I have to follow it with the "that's all right" because the reaction on their part is quickly embarrassment as if an embarrassing fact has just been discovered.

I don't know if that illustrates what I am trying to say the general tone is.

It is our matter-of-fact attitude that we are a family, you know, just like you folks—that is what is being well received. Thirty years ago when I was a child growing as a stepchild, that was not the case.

Chairman **Miller**. All of the members of this committee have been concerned and been involved in legislation dealing with the collection of child support payments.

You apparently have not had that problem, but in your stepfamily association, what kind of problem does that present to other stepfamilies?

Mrs. **Ginger Davis**. It is definitely there. I certainly, like you have mentioned, have not had the problem of collecting. We all have our opinions about the adequacy. I just had an opportunity to comment on Governor Hughes' committee that is coming up with guidelines, in my capacity as president of the Montgomery County Stepfamily Chapter of the Stepfamily Association.

In our own particular group, we don't often hear the monetary concerns spoken so much as we do the emotional difficulties, because they hit us every day. Every day when those relationships are there in your home, these multitudiness and varied relationships—those are the things that hit you at breakfast, at lunch, and at dinner, and the turmoil from those when they are not well can keep a family absolutely on ulcer's edge. So mainly we deal with a lot of the emotional concerns—and very practical.

We have things called suggestion circle. Someone will come with a problem: My ex-wife did this, may I have suggestions about how to handle it? And we give each other help that way.

May I also say that this particular group of which I am the president this year—we are all white. Right now we had a black couple come from the District of Columbia because they don't have a D.C. chapter; they haven't been able to continue coming. We are white, we are middle class, and I don't think we represent the financial difficulty side of it, I truly don't.

Chairman **Miller**. Thank you.

Mrs. Horne, what do you think is the most important support mechanism in helping your family stay together through the years, if you look back? You mentioned a number of them. I just wonder, in times of crisis what would be helpful.

Mrs. **Josephine Horne**. Actually, when we were at our lowest point, our love for each other. We had always been taught to believe in God and pray, and we did.

The schools practically helped us raise our daughter. She was in there about as much time as she was at home. We actually had to depend on them to help us raise her.

Chairman **Miller**. What do you think your situation would have been if you had not been able to put her in a private school?

Mrs. **Josephine Horne**. I probably would have had to stop work. I feel we wouldn't be where we are today, that's a fact.

As I say, from the very first job that Lynwood got we started our savings. We were interested in buying a house. We had never even seen an apartment until we came to Washington. The idea of coming out your front door and looking at cement—you know, no grass—it just seemed strange to us. We wanted a house with a yard, where she could run around and play and wouldn't be disturbing the neighbors.

We knew we had to start that savings even if it was only $2 a week to get this. We probably wouldn't have been able to do so if I had had to stop work as soon as we did.

Chairman **Miller**. Thank you.

Congressman Coats.

Mr. **Coats**. Thanks to both of you for your appearance this morning and your testimony before us.

If I could start with the Davis family. You are not a typical family and you defy the statistics. I want to congratulate you on that. You have identified some of the reasons why you do that. But tragically, the statistics that have come before this committee and much of the testimony we have heard paints a very different picture than what you paint.

We find that biological fathers that leave the family don't maintain any contact; don't provide support and many don't ever see their children again.

We find that second marriages often don't work. And many of the characteristics and things that you have had to deal with are the exception-to-the-rule in terms of your success. So I think it is particularly important from that standpoint that you are able to tell us how you did it, what you had to overcome. You obviously had a significant amount of obstacles. And as I said, you fly in the face of the statistics.

Because you are not typical, I am trying to find out whether or not your success in this second effort is the result of lessons that you have learned in the first effort. In other words, did you draw some conclusions, on your obvious commitment to the family—and I think you have stated it very, very well in the fact that your commitment is such that you are willing to work at it day after day to keep that family together.

Is that the result of a commitment that you made after the failure of the first situation? Mr. Davis, I don't know if this is your second marriage or not.

Mr. **Herb Davis**. Yes.

Mr. **Coats**. It is.

Were there lessons learned in that first experience that you have carried into this second experience that have resulted in the difference?

Maybe I am not making myself clear.

Mrs. **Ginger Davis**. Even back further than that. In my own particular case, my parents broke up when I was 1½ years old. There was an older sister and myself. My mother remarried when I was 2½ and they had a child when I was 3½. I was brought up to think my stepfather was my father. It was the family myth. He adopted me and my older sister, and I never met my father again until I was 22 and found him. I went looking for him and I found him.

My stepfather was not a nice man. It was not a good marriage. It was not a good family. I have been motivated all my life—not just my first marriage experiences, from which I have learned—but from my family of origin. So my own particular situation—there's almost 40 years of being very concerned about family. Certainly I have learned things from my first marriage. I don't think I am that much different. I felt as dedicated in the first one.

Perhaps I feel that way because I didn't initiate my divorce, and I might, you know, look at things different. I am sure that is a bias.

Mr. COATS. Mr. Davis, did you want to comment?

Mr. HERB DAVIS. I think there is a very basic lesson—when you asked about lessons we have learned—and that is, if you have been divorced once, you probably don't want to get divorced twice. Even though that, again, is not what the statistics show, I think there is enough pain. Once again, my first marriage ended not by my choice but by my ex-wife's choice.

So my feeling about this relationship is that I better work even harder. I think that is part of it. I think also being 10 years older than Ginger, having children who are half a generation older, has helped our situation in that I have another chance to correct mistakes that I was too young to realize I made 25 years ago.

So maybe the lesson there is that maturity helps.

Mr. COATS. I think it is particularly important that you have succeeded because so many have the attitude that the family is changing and we just live in a different society, and we just have to accept the trend; but you have reversed the trend, and you fly in the face of the statistics. I think you stand as an example of a situation where we can say we don't just have to accept the trend. We don't have to accept the way things are going.

We can, by incorporating commitments and other elements, reverse those trends. That is what is so important, I think, as we look at this hearing.

Go ahead.

Mr. HERB DAVIS. There is one other fact, I think, that makes our family unusual that hasn't come out, because it has added so much to our knowledge base, and that is that Ginger has been changing her career from a technical math major doing data processing work to currently working on a Ph.D. in social work. She has done that on a half-time basis for over 6 years.

She has brought to our family all of the knowledge that comes from those studies that we can look at, that we can discuss. I think that is an important factor.

Mr. COATS. Mrs. Horne, I wonder if I could ask you a question? You stated that in response to Congressman Miller's question you felt that the greatest support mechanisms were your love for each other, which kept you together through tough times, and your belief in God. A shared religious belief is one of the characteristics that Congressman Wolf mentioned in terms of the research that Dolores Curran had done.

You were married just after high school, so I assume you were both 17, 18, in that range. We have a lot of teenagers getting married today. You have lived through that experience. What advice would you give to them—if a 17-year-old high school senior came to you and said, "I am in love, and I am trying to decide what to do with my future?" You were married just after high school. What advice would you give her? What would you tell her?

Mrs. **Josephine Horne**. In our situation, I think it was a little bit different than today. Lynwood graduated a year before I did and, of course, waited on me to graduate—then we got married. When we was growing up, there just was not anything to do, or any place to go, other than school. On the weekend, you just sat at home and that was it. There was just nothing to do.

I know we would have gotten married later anyway, even if we hadn't gotten married right after high school. But if we had been in a situation whereby we had experience—some of the things that teenagers have today—for instance, my daughter—we might not have gotten married quite that early. I would say to them, don't do it, get your education first and a job. Be prepared if you should start your family before you are ready.

I think we were a bit different. We actually were grown up. We were not the average kids, we really weren't. We actually knew what we wanted, and for the past 23 years we have not changed our minds about it. That is not the average teenager.

I know my daughter is not ready. She is not ready for marriage. She is 17, and I don't believe she is ready yet.

Mr. **Coats**. How does she feel about that?

Ms. **Delphina Horne**. No, I don't really think I am—or any other teenager is ready for marriage, because if they really loved each other and they wanted to get married they could wait. You know, if their love was strong enough, then it could last that time.

Mr. **Coats** [presiding]. Thank you. I also want to commend your family for your success in "sticking it out" and keeping the family together through, obviously, some difficult times, and overcoming some real obstacles.

Congresswoman Boxer.

Mrs. **Boxer**. Thank you very much. I want to thank both families as well very interesting, and I have learned a lot. I wanted to say in advance, I am going to a press conference about the problems of custody and divorce at 10:30, so if I have to leave, I will be coming back.

I did have a couple of questions. First of all, Ginger, you talked about the strengths of your particular family, and I wrote them down because I think there is a lot to be said for it. You said love, professional help, devotion to family, maturity, and economic security.

Now, two of those five are tough for a lot of other folks to have—economic security and professional help, because if you can't afford the professional help sometimes it is rough. I wanted to focus in on that professional help without getting too personal because that is not the point.

How important, really, was it for you? And was it something you did on an ongoing basis in times of crisis, or was it a sporadic thing—if you had a particular problem, go in and ask for help?

Mrs. **Ginger Davis**. For us personally, it has been a couple of times over the years. We have an attitude about getting therapy that stems from our own experiences and my own, you know, when I grow up I am going to be a therapist kind of thing. I have already gotten an MSW that required being on the other side of the desk. We have experience on each side of the desk, and it helps—you know, as client and as therapist; not so much as therapist. But at the age of 50, with a 9-year stepmarriage behind him, he is sort of an oracle, and people know, and they come to him, and so on. And that is helpful—you have an inner sense of yourself.

I guess a lot of it is just our attitude, which we try to give away. You know, we know very well what the attitude in our culture is about labeling yourself as someone who needs professional help. It isn't good. So if there is something we can do about that—these are pragmatic issues. I mean, we know enough about stepfamilies to know there is nothing wrong with me if I don't get along with my stepson. It is just the way it is. Now, what are we going to do about it? And maybe we can get some help.

Mrs. **Boxer**. So you would say, then, in your particular case it was important to have that help when you needed it. I assume, then, for us, looking at the status of families, it is something we should consider when people can't afford it, try to get ways to help them out.

Mrs. **Ginger Davis**. I feel very strongly about that, very strongly.

I am also aware of the realities. Therapy, when it is necessary, is not going to be available to everybody, no matter how good the work is that your committee does. That is why I am so proud of this outside lay organization. It is not therapy-based, it is a support group—this Stepfamily Association of America.

Mrs. **Boxer**. But it does perform that function in someway?

Mrs. **Ginger Davis**. Yes, it can, it sure does.

Mrs. **Boxer**. Herb, I wanted to ask you, you made a comment, we deal with families in a nontraditional manner. I wasn't sure exactly what you meant. Could you explain that?

Mr. **Herb Davis**. I think by non traditional I mean that you have to learn that a stepfamily does not work like a biological family, nor do you have the same emotions and the same feelings.

My first marriage was 18 years in length. I had a 16-year-old daughter—my oldest child was 16 when the marriage ended. So I had 16 years of raising children within a traditional family. I had a lot of trouble adapting to the fact that Kate and John had another father—he was very active in their life; that my relationship with them had to be different. I couldn't say, as Ginger mentioned in her childhood, that it didn't work, say that there is no biological father. That was always a very open issue for the children's benefit.

I had to learn that I could be a father in the house but not the only father, which to me was very nontraditional. I thought if you were the father, you were the father, and you had the say on many things that I learned later that I didn't. I had to compromise more, or just realize that I didn't have the right to make things work the way I wanted them to work—and that was tough for me.

Mrs. **Boxer**. And that is a major difference for sure.

Mr. **Herb Davis**. I believe that is true—to realize that and to be able to say, that's OK, it is different, but it is OK. Those things can also drive you out of the relationship if you say they are not OK.

Mrs. **Boxer**. I have two quick questions for Mrs. Horne. The first one—with all the talk about how great Federal employees get paid, I was shocked to hear you say that you took a cut in pay from being a dry cleaning store clerk to go to work for the Federal Government. I wonder, what was your entry level position at that time?

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. A clerk-typist, GS-2.

Mrs. BOXER. Made less than a dry cleaning clerk?

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. Yes.

Mrs. BOXER. That is really shocking.

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. I was thinking that in that dry cleaning store, there was no benefits. At that time the Government was pretty secure.

Mrs. BOXER. Oh, you did the right thing. I am just making a side bar comment that spills over to another issue I care about.

My last question: I was struck by how important school and child care were to your fulfilling your family's dream of moving up on the ladder and having the security you needed to buy your home and everything else. Was I right in picking that up, that in fact, if it wasn't for the fact that you were able to get aftercare, aftercare school and child care, that you really couldn't have fulfilled the things that you did as a family?

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. You are right. Perhaps sometime in life, not as quickly as we did, and maybe we wouldn't even have. We wanted three children. And after having her and found out what child care services was available, we decided against that.

Mrs. BOXER. So the struggle with the child care really led you to the decision not to expand your family.

Mrs. JOSEPHINE HORNE. Right.

Mrs. BOXER. That is very interesting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

Congressman Bliley.

Mr. BLILEY. No questions, thank you.

Mr. COATS. Congresswoman Schroeder.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Thank you very much. I want to salute both you families. You have done a wonder job of being here.

I think the Davises have been very candid about how money has helped. When I see the statistics about how the average child support payment, if it is made, is less than the average car payment, and how that 49 percent of the biological fathers never see the children after divorce. That, to me, is very candid and very honest of you to admit, because I think that is one of the real problems we have—seeing families with the financial stops pulled out from under them, and that only exacerbates the crisis mentality, so I appreciate your mentioning that.

With the Hornes, I want to say, too, I really admire your sticking to it. Mr. Horne, I admire you; didn't you ever want to go just have a Mercedes?

Mr. LYNWOOD HORNE. I didn't think I could ever afford it.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. You didn't think you could ever afford it?

Mr. LYNWOOD HORNE. No.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Obviously, you really went through some tough times because you can't save it—you know, economically, it wasn't all handed to you, you had to work for every single thing. I think that is marvelous.

I suppose from where you work today, Mrs. Horne, you probably haven't heard anybody talk about better child care, have you?

Mrs. **Josephine Horne**. No.

Mrs. **Schroeder**. I think, again, the tragedy is less than 5 percent of the child care slots are subsidized, and many of them look more like kennels. We still haven't dealt with the quality issue many years later, as your daughter is in high school. It looks like she gets to deal with it, too, unless we suddenly come up with something.

So I think that you have all hit some things that are very, very important, and I thank you for being here. I just hope we get some energy in this country to finally start taking some of those things head-on rather than keep talking about them year after year after year, and not doing anything about child care, and not more aggressively getting better child support enforcement and higher child support payments, and all those things. Because I think, clearly, that makes a big difference in how people can respond and thrive.

Thank you.

Mr. **Coats**. Thank you.

Congressman Wolf.

Mr. **Wolf**. Thank you. I have no questions, just to say I want to thank the panel. You both really are committed to make these marriages work. I think that is probably as important as anything else and not just throwing up your hands when something doesn't work out economically or some other way.

I want to thank both of you for being here.

Mr. **Coats**. Congressman Smith.

Mr. **Smith**. No questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **Coats**. Congressman Fish.

Mr. **Fish**. No questions, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **Coats**. I want to thank both families for your attendance and your wisdom. The kids may now get back to school. I can see they are anxious to get out of here and back into the classroom. We very much appreciate your appearance and your testimony. It is a valuable part of our record. Thank you.

Our next panel consists of Tamara Hareven—Dr. Hareven is a professor of history at Clark University, and a research associate for the Center for Population Studies at Harvard; Dr. Andrew Cherlin, who is associate professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins; Dr. Nick Stinnett, who is dean of the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University; Lulu Beatty, project director of the Mental Health Research and Development Center, Institute for Urban Affairs and Research, at Howard University; and Dr. George Rekers, professor of neuropsychiatry and behavioral science at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia, SC.

We welcome the second panel.

We thank each of the panelists for attending and we will open it up for your opening statements. First, in the order of announcement, Dr. Hareven.

STATEMENT OF TAMARA K. HAREVEN, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, CLARK UNIVERSITY, AND CENTER FOR POPULATION STUDIES, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Ms. HAREVEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Coats.

I appreciate the committee's invitation to testify here today and to share whatever insights we might have gained about the current conditions of the American families from our research as historians of the family and as scholars of various other aspects of the family.

I feel very moved by the fact that you opened the testimony with real live families. Their testimony was as inspiring to me as, no doubt, it was to the members of the committee.

Let me only remind you that for every family of the two types of families who have struggled and have survived, there are another four families out there who have not overcome the difficult circumstances they are facing. I think we must keep the whole picture in our minds as we try to understand what changes American families have been experiencing over time.

Over the past 2 years, I have had frequent occasion to go on lecture trips about the American family in Japan and China. In fact, policymakers and scholars in Japan and China were very anxious to find out whether the American family was going out of existence, particularly because they were afraid that sooner or later they might be following our model, as they continue to modernize rapidly. They were concerned that whatever they considered to be the infectious spread of the divorce rate and other problems of the American family might also become widespread in those countries in Asia.

I reassured them that the American family is not an endangered species and that, in fact, our media have much too much exaggerated what they consider to be the dangers of the extinction of the American family.

In order to assess the current state of the American family, it is important for us to understand what changes the family has actually experienced, which of these changes are part of a continuing trend, and which are dramatic departures. In this respect, the historical perspective is especially helpful.

Particularly, I would like to emphasize what strengths have survived from the historical changes in the American family, and how policymakers can draw on these strengths, utilize them, and support them in order to render families more consistently effective in facing crises and economic difficulties. Identifying strengths as such is not enough. We cannot simply rest on the illusion that just because families of the type we have seen here this morning are coping almost entirely on their own, that the Government has no responsibility. What we need to do is identify these strengths and then see how public policies can support families in their effort to cope with economic pressures in order to realize their strengths to the fullest potential.

In order to understand the changes that have taken place in American family life, we also need to free ourselves from some of the myths under which we have been operating. Our illusions about a nonexistent ideal past in American life have often blinded us from witnessing the reality.

One of these myths is that there once was a golden age in family relations in the past in which three generations lived happily and harmoniously together—something like the Waltons. But historical research has shown that the type of family that the Waltons represented on TV never existed in reality. Even from the very beginning of the American settlement on this continent, the typical family was a nuclear family—one where only parents and their own children were living together. The older generation always lived in separate households from their adult children and grandchildren, even though they often lived nearby.

Thus, in fact the typical American family pattern has been a nuclear family since the settlement of the Pilgrim Fathers. Nor has the family in the past experienced a golden age free of conflict and of problems within it. The elderly never lived harmoniously in the bosom of the family. Because of a shorter life expectancy in the past, most older people rarely lived long enough to see their own grandchildren grow up beyond infancy.

Another myth connected with the past of the American family is that women were once full-time homemakers and mothers. In reality, women have always worked. The myth that the wife should stay at home and take care of children emerged only with industrialization and only in the middle class. Ironically, this ideology of full-time motherhood began to spread at the very time when new industries following the industrial revolution recruited working class mothers and wives in large numbers into the labor force.

Once we accept the fact that these ideal descriptions of family life in the past were myths, with no foundation in reality, and once we recognize that industrialization did not cause the breakdown of a great traditional family, we need to understand what has changed in the family.

The first major change I will discuss here is in the membership of the family. Even though the American family had been nuclear in the past and had not been broken down by industrialization and urbanization, nevertheless it differed from the nuclear family today, because American families in the past, even as late as the 1920's, included non-relatives in the household. Those non-relatives were apprentices and also dependent members of the community who had been placed with the family in a kind of foster care system in the past, as well as boarders and lodgers. Boarders and lodgers were young people who had left their own families abroad or in rural areas, and boarded with elderly couples whose own children had left home.

We should remember this kind of example from the past—that there once existed an exchange between generations, not only between parents and children in the same family, but also between unrelated individuals in providing a surrogate family system. This kind of exchange provided very important forms of support and sociability for older people. When we observe the problems of elderly couples or elderly widows today, we might want to consider reviving this kind of pattern of exchange between relatives and nonrelatives where real family members are not in existence, and to provide appropriate policy measures that would make this possible.

Boarders and lodgers disappeared from family life around the 1920's because of increase in the availability of housing and because of an excessive empahsis on privacy in the family. As the family became more private, it lost the flexibility of expanding the household to include nonrelatives in time of need.

This brings me to the next change in the American family. Over the past century, the American family has become exceedingly more private and more separated from the community. The functions and the values of the family have changed, accordingly.

In the colonial period, the family was closely integrated with the community. The family was serving the community as well as being served by it. This is why in some ways the family also fulfilled several important functions for the community. With industrialization the family had lost many of its earlier functions and began to specialize in child rearing and in maintaining the home as a retreat from the outside world. Because of this commitment to privacy, the family might have lost some of the flexibility which it had had earlier in interacting with the community.

We might want to find ways in which we can strengthen and encourage the family to return and interact more effectively with the community, and recover some of its earlier functions. This, of course, cannot be done without a public policy, without public support, or the burden on the family would be too heavy to carry.

Another area of change has occurred in the relationship of the family with the larger kinship group. Historically, even though the American family was nuclear, family members were enmeshed in effective kinship networks with relatives outside the household. Relatives other than the nuclear family were not living together, but they were living nearby and they were helping each other. Prior to the emergence of the welfare state, kin were almost the exclusive source of mutual assistance and Social Security. Despite these patterns of assistance among kin in the past, we know very well from history that kinship by itself was not able to carry these kinds of burdens.

With respect to kin assistance we need to dispel yet another myth. We often hear it said that it was the emergence of Social Security that undermined mutual assistance among kin because it made it superfluous. This is not true. We know that the welfare state and the Social Security system have been very limited, even after they were finally passed during the New Deal. Perhaps one of the major reasons why the Social Security legislation could pass was because during the Great Depression it became very clear that kin alone could not shoulder the entire burden of family assistance, because when everyone was in the same boat of deprivation, they were all likely to sink together.

The historical changes in mutual assistance among kin provide us with another great opportunity: The fact that on the one hand important kinship ties and traditions of kin assistance are still surviving—especially among different ethnic groups and second generation immigrants—can provide us with a very important resources of family strengths; but this does not mean that they should be left to take care of their own. They cannot do it alone. We have to identify the strengths and the continuity in kinship ties and to buttress those in face of rising individualism and geographic mobility. We have to provide such forms of assistance—for example, through tax incentives—that can further empower and enable kin to help each other.

Another major change affecting family life is in the life course. In this area we are witnessing one of the great changes and one of the great opportunities in the history of the American family and in American life in general—namely, the decline in mortality and the increase in life expectancy.

Much has been said about the extension of life in the later years. But very little has been said about the survival to adulthood. Yet one of the most important demographic changes in American society has been the survival of children to adulthood. The extension of life, particularly survival in the earlier years of life, is the great demographic gift of our times.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, an increasing proportion of the American population has been able to survive through the entire life span—to reach adulthood, to marry, to bear children, to survive jointly with a spouse into old age, and, for women, to survive the spouse by another 9 years.

Now this rare opportunity for survival to adulthood was not available to the population before 1900. Prior to that, only about 40 percent of American women were able to live through the entire script of family life. But now, since the past two or three decades, the greatest demographic opportunity for the American family is to survive as a unit over the lifetime of its members, except when disrupted by divorce.

The great irony of our times is that even though we have now the maximal opportunity to survive as a family, and for older people the opportunity to experience grandparenthood, and even great-grandparenthood for the first time in history, we have not fully realized that opportunity. The opportunity for couples to survive together has been counteracted by divorce; the opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren to enrich each other has been counteracted by the increasing isolation and separation between the generations.

These demographic changes present major challenges to American family life, but we have not fully realized their potential. The issues of divorce and of isolation of older people require further elaboration.

As far as divorce is concerned, Professor Cherlin will talk about this topic in detail. I would like, however, to place the current high divorce rates in historical perspective. Indeed, the soaring divorce rate—particularly from the mid-1960's to the mid-1970's (it has leveled off since the 1970's) has probably been one of the most dramatic changes in American family life.

In fact, divorce now has a similar effect on family disruption that death once had. Some people in my audiences in China asked me: "Why doesn't your government do anything to stop divorce?" Of course, I explained that we are a free, democratic society, and we have our rights to excerise our choices about family life. But the questions still remain: Why doesn't our society do anything about the wreckage that divorce leaves behind? Why doesn't our society do more for the single-parent families, especially those headed by divorced mothers?

About one-quarter of the families with children under 18 are now headed by one parent. The majority of these single parents are female; yet no single-parent family was represented here among the families testifying this morning. The problems of single-parent families are real, nevertheless, and the majority of single-parent families are living in poverty.

We need to be less concerned, therefore, with divorce, about which we can do very little; but we need to be concerned with the single-parent families, for whom we can do a great deal.

Even though the divorce rate seems very dramatic today, seen from a historical perspective, we also need to understand that the high divorce rate today is a result of the fact that divorce is now more easily attainable from a legal point of view, and it has also become more socially acceptable.

This does not mean, however, that in the past couples lived harmoniously and never separated. In many cases, families in the past lived under great tension and in great conflict, because they could not afford a divorce. In fact, when divorce was not socially acceptable, many couples separated through desertion and separation. In many cases, children in families that broke up through separation and desertion were worse off than children in families that resort to a legal divorce, which regulates custody and child support.

Divorce now ends more frequently in remarriage, and remarriage produces the kind of blended families we have seen here today. Divorce and remarriage have also led to the emergence of new kinship configurations. As a result of the remarriage of one or both of their parents, children of divorce may have access to three or four sets of grandparents rather than just two. They also may have access to many more aunts and uncles and cousins, and new relatives. Thus, there is encouraging evidence that divorce, in many cases, is followed by a recovery and reconstruction, as well as expansion of family ties.

This brings me to another area of great concern that we should be facing, namely, the isolation of older people resulting from an increasing separation between generations.

I mentioned earlier the existence of boarders and lodgers in a majority of families in the past. In fact, since the practice of taking in boarders and lodgers has disappeared almost completely, the rate of solitary residence in American society has assumed enormous proportion. In the 19th century, solitary residence was nonexistent. Only 3 percent of the population were known to live alone before 1900.

Now, single individual households comprise close to 20 percent of the population. If those solitary individual households consisted only of young singles, it wouldn't be so alarming. What is alarming is the fact that the major proportion of the solitary households (what the Census calls "the primary individual") are elderly widows, who lock their doors at 5 p.m. who are afraid to go out onto the street, and who are, therefore, trapped in their loneliness.

The separation between generations and the resulting isolation of older people is a critical issue in American family life today. It is an issue that will become more dramatic as time goes on. The problem will become worse before it becomes better, because we are now on the threshold of moving into an "aging society"—a society in which the normal age pyramid is going to be reversed.

The problem of the isolation of older people is not restricted to the elderly; it is also a problem of the middle-aged couple. The children of older people who are caught in the "sandwich" or the "life cycle squeeze" are middle-aged people who, on the one hand, have to support aging parents, and on the other hand are still launching their own children. Middle-aged women are particularly experiencing this squeeze, because they have to carry these major burdens; and at the same time, they also have to work fulltime and worry about their own future old age.

In this respect we have to find, therefore, a family policy that addresses the needs of the elderly and the needs of young children, basically the needs of people in all stages of life.

In the 1950's and 1960's American society was polarized around race issues. Subsequently, it was becoming polarized around gender issues. Now it is already becoming polarized along age lines. We can avoid, however, polarization along age lines. The question of policy measures in support of young children versus support of older people is not a simple tradeoff, because we cannot afford to give up either. What we need in fact is an integrated policy focussed on the family as a unit that would enable the family to support the various generations and the various age groups within it. American society so far has not had such a policy. Unlike Sweden and many Western European countries, American society has not had a family policy. Certain policy measures affected the family by default rather than being addressed directly at the family, and most of American family policy has been directed toward specific age groups rather than at the family.

Mr. COATS. Dr. Hareven?

Ms. HAREVEN. I will close with the next few sentences.

Mr. COATS. OK, thank you.

Ms. HAREVEN. I suggest that there are many models from the past that can be revived and incorporated into a policy that would strengthen the entire family unit, and, therefore, enable the family to carry out its responsibilities to its members and to the society; for example: the model of exchanges among generations.

Mr. COATS. Thank you, Dr. Hareven. Thank you very much.

[Prepared statement of Tamara K. Hareven follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TAMARA K. HAREVEN, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, CLARK UNIVERSITY, AND CENTER FOR POPULATION STUDIES, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades the American family has been experiencing dramatic changes, which have tended to provoke anxieties about the future of the family. Some of these changes are part of a continuing trend; others represent dramatic departures. The coincidence of some of these changes—such as soaring divorce rates, and the concomitant rise in single-parent (female headed) households, cohabitation without marriage, and the increasing isolation of older people—have led various people to cast serious doubts about the future of the American family. Some have gone so far as to declare the family an "endangered species."

MYTHS ABOUT THE FAMILY

In reality, the family has always been undergoing various changes. Since the foundation of American society, every generation has raised some questions about the future of the family. A historical perspective can help us examine these various changes in family life in context, in order to understand which ones represent drastic departures and which one are a continuity of earlier patterns. Such a historical examination can also enable us to identify the continuing strengths of families, in order to find the best strategies for maintaining these strenghts and fulfilling their potential.

To fully understand the historical changes in the family, it is necessary to dispel some of the commonly held myths about the past, which have clouded our understanding of family life in the present. Nostalgia for a non-existent past has handicapped policy makers in assessing realistically the current strengths and weaknesses of the family. One of these myths is the belief that there once existed a golden age in family relations; that a three-generation family resided together harmoniously; older people were supposed to have been integrated within the family and women supposedly were full-time mothers and homemakers.

In reality, a three-generational family never existed in the American past. The great extended family of past time is a figment of the popular imagination. American family life never quite resembled that of the Waltons. Actually, the prevalent family pattern since the colonial period has been one of a nuclear family, consisting of parents and their children. Aging parents rarely lived together with their children. Nor did industralization cause the breakdown of a great harmonious family in the past, as had been imagined before. The nuclear family had already been the prevalent family form in American society prior to industralization.

HISTORICAL CHANGE IN THE FAMILY

Despite this continuity, several important changes have occurred in family life since the beginning of the nineteenth century. First, the membership and the age configurations within the nuclear family have changed. As a result of the decline in fertility, the family unit has become smaller, containing fewer children who are closer in age. Second, the family has become a more private institution, its membership restricted to relatives in blood and marriage only.

By contrast, in earlier times, the family also included non-relatives, such as boarders, lodgers, apprentices, servants, and dependent members of the community, who were placed under the care of the family. This diverse membership reflected the variety of functions which the family once held, and its great flexibility in providing a home for unrelated individuals in addition to its own members.

As the family became more private and the home more exclusively restricted to family members, the family lost some of the flexibility it had had in the past. This flexibility could be recovered, however, today, and could be used effectively as a resource in coping with crises and economic adversity.

A related change in family life has been the family's surrender of some of its earlier functions. Under the impact of urbanization and industiralization, the household's functions as a production unit and as a welfare institution were transferred to other institutions, such as work places, vocational schools, and welfare agencies. As a result, the family has concentrated more exclusively on child care and on serving as a therapeutic retreat from the outside world. The home has become more private and separate from the community.

RELATIVES WITH KIN

The nuclear family's relationship to extend kin outside the household has also undergone considerable change. Initially, members of the nuclear family were enmeshed in extended kin networks, even though they were not living together. Prior to the emergence of the welfare state, kin assistance was the almost exclusive source of social security. If people did not have relatives to help them, they became charity cases.

Despite urbanization and industrialization, kinship has remained an important resource in families' coping with change and stress. This is true in the case of certain ethnic groups, more especially among the more recent arrivals. But changing family values since the 1930s have led to increasing individualization. This combined with increased geographic mobility has tended to undermine solidarity among kin, especially in the middle class.

Some have argued that the emergence of the welfare state has caused this weakening of kinship ties. The opposite is in fact the case. Social security legislation finally did pass under the New Deal, in part because it demonstrated the limited ability of kin to shoulder the burden of kin assistance without external supports.

Mutual assistance among kin, even though it might have weakened some, still is one of the great surviving resources in the American family. Adequate policy measures could be developed to buttress the nuclear family and the kinship networks in which it is enmeshed in their efforts to maintain their mutual assistance during periods of rapid economic change and stress.

THE LIFE CYCLE

Major changes have also occurred in the life cycle of individuals and families. The most important change in this respect has been the increasing opportunity for individual to spend their entire lives in family units (except when disrupted by divorce), and to survive together with their relatives through most of their lives. The decline in mortality since the turn of the century has brought about major changes in age configurations of the family and in its membership. The most crucial change has not been the extension of life in the later years, but the increasing chance for infants and children to survive to adulthood. As a result, increasing numbers of children have been growing up with their siblings and both parents alive; and parents have lived to see their children become adults. Grandparenthood and great-grandparenthood have become a common experience in the lives of older people. The family's potential to survive as a unit over the entire lives of its members is the great demographic gift of our times.

Unfortunately, American society has not fully realized these great potentials of the extension of life. Divorce counteracts a couple's chances to survive together, and age segregation often separates grandparents from their grandchildren. Similarly, the extension of life in the later years of life—"the extra decade" is currently being viewed as a problem rather than an opportunity.

American society is facing, therefore, the challenge of adjusting to these new dimensions in family life, and of realizing their full potential.

The decline in mortality combined with earlier marriage, earlier childbearing and with having fewer children has also led to the emergence of the "empty nest" as a typical stage of a couple's life in middle age. Prior to the beginning of the century, the majority of the population never experienced an empty nest, because people married later, had larger numbers of children, and lived shorter lives.

The empty nest, however, is not strictly a product of these demographic factors. It is also a result of changing generational relations and commitments. Earlier, famillial obligations required that at least one child remain at home to support aging parents. In recent decades, segregation among generations and increasing individualism had led to the departure of children from the home, while parents are still in middle age. While this type of pattern frees up the couple's time, it also has a counter-effect in causing an increasing separation between the generations, which tends to reinforce the isolation of older people later in life. In some instances the empty nest has begun to refill, or stay full, because of diminishing employment and housing opportunities for young adults. This pattern is temporary, however.

After having outlined considerable historial continuities in family trends in the United States, it now behooves us to examine areas of more dramatic change. These include the entrance of married women and mothers into the labor force, the rising divorce rate followed by the increase in the proportion of female-headed households, the increasing separation between generations, and the resulting isolation of older people.

MOTHERS IN THE LABOR FORCE

The rapid pace of married women and mothers' entrance into the labor force has been one of the most positive developments in family life during recent times. Although there has been a continuity in labor force participation among working class wives since the beginning of industrialization in the nineteenth century, the major change since World War II has been that of increasing labor force participating among middle-class wives and mothers.

While World War II first opened the opportunity and set the pattern, married women's gainful employment actually grew in two stages: first, in the 1950s, married women began to enter the labor force in considerable numbers after the completion of child rearing. The dramatic change has been, however, since the 1960s: married women's work has ceased to be life-cycle related. Women continued to remain in the labor force even while rearing their children.

This trend has also been accompanied by a change in values: while initially mothers' labor force participation had been frowned upon as being harmful to the family, especially to children, there is now an increasing acceptance of mothers' work outside the home and a recognition of the positive assets of this pattern for family life. Mothers' gainful employment is increasingly valued not only for economic reasons, but also for providing satisfaction and sociability, and for forging greater continuity between the world of the home and the world of work.

DIVORCE AND SINGLE PARENTS

On the other hand, an alarming change affecting the family has been the unprecedented high divorce rate. Statistically, divorce now has the same effect that death once did breaking up families. From the mid-1960s to the 1970s, divorce rates have doubled. Since the 1970s, half of all marriages contracted are likely to end in divorce. Even though the divorce rate stabilized in the mid-1970s, its effect on the emergence of female-headed households struggling with poverty is still visible, and continues to increase.

Without denying the negative impact of divorce on families and children, it is important to understand that divorce itself is not a recent invention. Divorce is now statistically more visible, because recent legislative changes and public opinion have facilitated the dissolution of marriage through divorce. But this does not mean that in earlier times couples had not experienced conflict. Even a hundred years ago, marriages were breaking up through desertion and separation, or else, couples were suffering from marital conflict, and living together as strangers rather than divorcing.

As Professor Cherlin will point out, a majority of divorces are followed by remarriage. In this respect divorce reflects a positive attitude towards making family life meaningful and an emphasis on the quality of the couple relationship. Remarriage, in turn, has led to the emergency of "blended families," which in themselves have served as a new source of adaptability and stability. Divorce and remarriage have also generated new configurations of kin, therefore increasing the variety of support networks available to children. For example, through the remarriage of one or both of their parents, children have several sets of grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins.

THE ELDERLY

Finally, the increasing rate of solitary residence, especially for elderly widows, and the increasing isolation of older couples and individuals pose a major challenge to family life today. The need to support aging relatives imposes a "life cycle squeeze" on family members in middle age, especially women who are "sandwiched" in between launching their own children into adulthood, while caring for aging parents, and working full-time. As we move into the future, the children of old people will also be old, and therefore will have to worry about their own old age. It would be unrealistic therefore, to expect the family to be the main caregiver to the elderly.

There is little doubt that some of the trends outlined above will continue in the future. Women will continue to stay in the labor force, and even if the divorce rate is levelling off, most single or divorced mothers will have to continue to work. At the same time, with the extension of life, the needs of aging parents will continue to place increasing demands on their children, especially on their daughters.

Ironically, we have tended much too often to view the elderly as a burden, rather than as a potential resource that could be actively engaged in society, especially for solving such problems as child care for working mothers.

AN INTEGRATED FAMILY POLICY

A creative family policy is needed, therefore, in order to support the family's efforts to meet its obligations in both directions of the life cycle—for children and for the elderly. We need publically-supported child care in order to enable working mothers to function in the labor force. On the other end of the cycle, we need supports for assistance to elderly couples or individuals living alone in order to free care-giving families from their double bind.

Such a policy must be integrated and meet the needs of different age groups, of men and women, of widows and of working mothers. It also must address the cultural diversity in family life in American society. Policy planning can recover certain models from the past and adapt them to contemporary needs. For example, the historic tradition of informal exchange and mutual assistance between generations could be recovered and integrated into family focused programs.

The United States has never had an integrated policy aimed directly at the family. Most programs are intended for individuals in specific age groups, rather than the family unit itself. Most previous or existing welfare measures have affected the family by "default" rather than directly. An integrated policy can support the family in realizing its potential.

An understanding of historical changes in the family enables us to identify the various areas of strength in the past and present—a continuity in interdependence among kin, an opportunity for a majority of the population to survive together in family units, an increase in employment opportunities and regular work careers for wives and mothers, and a reaffirmation of a commitment to the family.

In all these areas and others, families have demonstrated great flexibility and a great resilience in coping with change and adversity. But many families, especially among the poor and the working class, have done so at great sacrifice. The less from history also reminds us how vulnerable families can be, and what a high price their members would have to pay, if they do not receive adequate public support in handling their various critical responsibilities.

Despite its many transformations, the family still is the most basic cell in American society. It still serves as an essential building block. In the case of children in particular, it has become dramatically clear that no other institution could replace the family. Now that the family has proven its resilience and its centrality, what is society going to do to buttress the family in order to provide it with the necessary support in order to enable it to serve its own members and the community?

AMERICAN FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN FAMILY STRENGTHS

BY TAMARA K. HAREVEN

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades the American family has been experiencing various changes, which have tended to provoke anxieties about its future. Some of these changes are part of a continuing trend; others represent dramatic departures. The coincidence of several changes—such as soaring divorce rates, the concomitant rise in single-parent (female headed) households, cohabitation without marriage, and the increasing isolation of older people—have led various people to cast serious doubts about the future of the American family. Some have gone so far as to declare the family an "endangered species."

In reality, the American family has always been undergoing various changes. Since the foundation of American society every generation has expressed grave concern about the future of the family. Through much of our past, the American family has been seen as the linchpin of the social order and the basis for social stability. Even though the family changes more gradually than other institutions in response to external forces, educators, and social planners have frequently expressed fear of family breakdown under the pressures of social change. More than any other development, however, industrialization and urbanization have been viewed as major threats to traditional family life and as causes of family breakdown.

Perception of change and anxieties about crisis in the American family today are influenced by commonly held myths about family life in the past. Some of these myths maintain that there once existed a golden age in family relations, when three generations lived together happily in the same household, when older people were supported by their relatives and women were full-time housewives and mothers. This belief in a lost golden age had led people to depict the present as a period of decline and breakdown in the family. Nostalgia for a mythical past has handicapped educators and policy makers in assessing realistically the current changes in the family.

In order to come to grips with the problems of the present, it is essential to examine changes in family life since the colonial settlement. A historical perspective helps us examine these various changes in family life in context. Looking at developments over time enables us better to assess the uniqueness of present conditions, and it also helps us distinguish between long-term trends and dramatic departures. To what extent are some of these changes part of a continuing historical process, and to what extent do they represent new departures?

This paper examines some of the changes in the American family in relation to the current, seemingly "dramatic" transitions in the following areas: membership of the family and the household, kin relations, the life cycle, divorce, and the family arrangements of older people.

CHANCES AND CONTINUITY IN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

Recent research has dispelled the myths about the existence of ideal three-generational families in the American past. This historical evidence now shows that there has never been in American society an era when co-residence of three generations in the same household was the common pattern. The "great extended families" in the past that have become part of popular belief in modern, industrial society were actually rarely in existence.

Even three hundred years ago households and families were simple in their structure and were usually limited to parents and their children; they rarely included other relatives. Nor was it common for three generations to live together in the same household. The older generation usually lived in a separate household, although in proximity to their children. Given the high mortality rate in preindustrial society, most men and women could not have expected to have overlapped with their grandchildren, except while the latter were very young. It would, thus, be futile to argue that industrialization destroyed the "great extended family" of the past. In reality, this type of family rarely existed.

Despite the continuity in a nuclear family pattern, nuclear families of the past differed in their structure from current nuclear families in several ways: households in the past included unrelated individuals who were boarders, lodgers, apprentices, or servants, or dependent members in the community, who were placed with families. In this respect, the composition of the household in the preindustrial period was significantly different from that in contemporary society. The tendency of families to include non-relatives in the household was connected with an entirely different concept of family life.

In contrast to the current emphasis on the family home as a private retreat, the household of the past was the site of a broad array of functions and activities that transcended the more restricted circle of the nuclear family. The household was a place of production and served as an abode for servants, apprentices, and dependent members of the community, such as orphaned children, or old men or women without relatives.

A considerable number of urban families continued to take in non-relatives as boarders as late as the 1920's. The practice of young people to board with other families thus continued, even after apprentices ceased to live in their masters' households. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, about one-fourth to one-third of the population either had lived in someone's household as a boarder or had taken boarders or lodgers at some point in their lives.

Boarding or lodging with urban families was an important form of exchange between generations. It enabled young men and women in their late teens and twenties who had left their parents' hoseholds, or who had migrated from other communities, to board in the households of older people whose own children had left home. It was thus possible for young people to stay in surrogate family arrangements. At the same time, taking in boarders provided old people with the opportunity to continue heading their own households without being isolated in their homes. The practice of boarding and lodging suggests great flexibility in families and households, a flexibility that has been partly lost over the past half century.

Increasing availability in housing since the 1920's and the spread of values of privacy in family life have led to phasing out of boarding and lodging, except among black families, where the practice of taking in boarders had survived to some extent. With the disappearance of boarding, the family has lost some of its major sources of resilience in its adptability to urban living.

In assessing the current situation of the family, it is important to realize that the most important change in American family life has not been the breakdown of a three-generational family, but, rather, the family's transformation into a private institution and the disappearance of non-relatives from the family's home. Since the beginning of this century the home has become identified as a retreat from the outside world, and the presence of "strangers" has gradually been viewed as a threat to the integrity of the family.

Since the 1920's the practice of boarding and lodging has been replaced by solitary living. The solitary residence of individuals—almost non-existent in the nineteenth century—began to increase in the post World War II period, and has reached dramatic proportions since the 1950's. While in the 19th century solitary residence was almost unheard of, now a major portion of the population resides alone. The disquieting aspect of this pattern is in the fact that a high percentage of those living alone are elderly widows. Thus, for a major portion of the population solitary residence is not a matter of free choice, but rather an unavoidable and often unbearable arrangement.

CHANGING FAMILY FUNCTIONS AND VALUES

Some of the most significant changes in family life have taken place in the functions of the family and in the values governing family life. Since the early nineteenth century, the family gradually surrendered functions which it had previously held to other social institutions.

In the colonial period the family not only reared children, but also served as a workshop, a school, a church or a welfare agency. The family meshed closely with the community and carried a variety of public responsibilities within the larger society. "Family and community," writes Demos, "private and public life, formed part of the same moral equation. The one supported the other and they became in a sense indistinguishable."

In preindustrial society, most of the work took place in the household. Roles of parenting were therefore congruent with social and economic roles. Children were considered members of the work force and were seen as economic assets. Child care was part of a general effort of household production, rather than a women's exclusive preoccupation; and children were not merely viewed as objects of nurture but as productive members of the family, from an early age on. Adolescence was virtually unknown as a distinct stage of life. The tasks of child rearing did not fall exclusively on mothers; other relatives living nearby also participated in this function. Family members were integrated into common economic activities. The segregation of roles in the family along gender and age lines that characterizes middle-class family life in modern society had not yet appeared.

The integration of family and work in preindustrial society allowed for an intensive sharing of labor between husbands and wives and between parents and children. Housework was inseparable from domestic industries or agricultural work, and it was valued, therefore, as an economic asset. Since children constituted a viable part of the labor force, motherhood, too, was valued for its economic contributions as well. Thus, women were considered workers and producers in their household.

Under the impact of industrialization, many of the family's functions were transferred to agencies and institutions outside the family. The work place was separated from the home, and functions of social welfare were transferred from the family to institutions of welfare and social control, such as juvenile reformatories, homes for the aged, and state mental hospitals; all of which first emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. The household ceased to be a place of production, and the family limited its activities primarily to consumption and child care.

These changes in family life brought about by industrialization were gradual however, and varied significantly from class to class. In working-class families industrialization offered women opportunites for gainful employment outside their homes. While working in such new jobs, women continued to function as integral parts of the family's productive effort. Even when they worked in factories, women viewed their labor as part of the family's collective effort, not as an independent career. In most working-class families, even when their members were employed in different enterprises, work was still considered a family enterprise, even if it did not take place in the home. In such families, the work of wives, sons, and daughters was carefully regulated by collective family strategies. With the emergence of industrial child labor in the 19th century, working-class families continued to recognize the economic value of motherhood, as they had in rural society.

Among middle class families, industrialization led to the separation between the home and the world of work and to the glorification of the home as a domestic retreat from the outside world. The new ideology of domesticity that developed in the first half of the 19th century relegated women to the home and restricted their role to being homemakers and mothers. Related to domesticity was a new view of children as tender creatures to be nurtured, and protected.

The ideology of domesticity and the new view of childhood combined to revise expectations of parenthood. The roles of husband and wives became gradually more separate; a clear division of labor replaced the old economic cooperation and wife's efforts concentrated on homemaking and child rearing. With men leaving the home to work elsewhere, time invested in fatherhood occurred primarily during leisure hours. Thus, the separation of husbands from wives and parents from children for major parts of the day emerged as the new pattern.

Stripped of their earlier functions, urban middle class families developed into private, domestic, and child-centered retreats from the world of work and politics. The idealization of motherhood as full-time career served both to enshrine the family as a domestic retreat from the world of work and to make families child-centered. Women were expected to make the home a perfect place for rearing children.

This marked the emergence of the domestic middle class family which has been considered the "typical American family" until very recently. The ideal of domesticity had emerged since the nineteenth century as a major part of the ideology of family life in American society. It has since dominated perceptions of women's roles, and has shaped prevailing assumptions governing family life.

These ideologies which emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century have served as a barrier against mothers' labor force participation into the 1960's. Having survived as long as they have, they handicapped women's pursuit of occupations outside the home.

As immigrants "Americanized" in the early part of the twentieth century, they adopted the values of domesticity and began to view women's work outside the home as demeaning, as carrying low status, or as compromising for the husband and harmful to children. Consequently, married women entered the labor force only when driven by economic necessity.

Only over the past decade and a half have these values been criticized and partly rejected. The increasing entry of married women into the labor force since World War II, and the recognition of their right to work and pursue a career has marked an important change and reversal in the ideology of domesticity. But the shadow of domesticity has persisted to some extent to the present. In many cases working mothers are still confronted with guilt and have to justify their decision to work.

By contrast to middle-class families, in working-class families and among various ethnic families, the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and other kin were based upon reciprocal assistance and support. Such relations drew their strength from the assumption that family members were all engaged in mutual obligations and in reciprocal relations. Although family members' obligations were not specifically defined by contract, they rested on the accepted social values as to what family members owed to each other. In the period preceding the welfare state, mutual assistance among kin was the exclusive source of social security, and provided important supports to individuals and families, during various life crises.

KIN RELATIONS

Industrialization and migration from rural to urban areas did not destroy traditional kinship ties. Even though extended kin did not reside in the same household with the nuclear family, they often lived in the same neighborhood, and were still involved in kinship networks.

Even long-distance migration did not destroy kinship ties. Various historical studies of different ethnic groups have shown that immigrants either joined their relatives or were followed by them into the new communities. They were thus able to reconstitute some of their kinship networks, and relied on them for assistance, as well as sources of continuity of their traditional culture. The same held true for migrants from local rural areas to cities. Migrants used their kin to facilitate their own transitions into urban life and to adapt to American society. After they found jobs and housing, they sent for their relatives. "Chain" migration thus helped maintain ties and continuities between family members in their new communities of settlement.

Kin performed a crucial role in initiating and organizing migration and in facilitating settlement upon arrival. Relatives acted as recruitment, migration, and housing agents for industrial laborers, helping each other shift from rural to industrial life and work patterns. Workers who migrated from rural to urban areas locally, and from other countries to the United States, carried parts of their kinship ties and family traditions into new settings.

Kinship networks formed an important part of the fiber of urban neighborhoods. Relatives tended to settle in proximity to each other, and as new immigrants arrived into American cities they settled near their kin, whenever possible. Thus, kinship ties provided coherence in the urban neighborhood and served as important sources of mutual assistance. This pattern has persisted, among certain ethnic groups, but has gradually weakened in the remainder of the population.

Since the 1930's, and more dramatically since World War II, increasing individualism and geographic mobility have led to a decline in contact and mutual assistance among kin. While many Americans are still in close communication with their kin, the interdependence with kin which has been typical of earlier time periods has eroded considerably, particularly among the younger age cohorts, and among second and third generation immigrants. Kin have ceased to be the major source of mutual support and social security.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the rise of social security and the welfare state have led to a decline in kin relations. In reality, the social security system was finally accepted in the American government, in the midst of the Great

Depression, because it had become evident that kin were incapable of carrying the major burden of assistance without public supports.

The persistence of kinship ties among certain groups should not lead us, therefore, to a new myth about the self-reliance of the family. It would be a mistake to assume that just because family members are helping each other in times of crisis they should be left to take care of their own. The historical precedents also suggest the high price that family members had to pay in order to support their kin and help aging parents.

The pressures on the nuclear family today, in a context of economic and technological stresses, would make it difficult if not impossible for families to provide continued assistance and support for their kin, especially for aging relatives. Nevertheless, the survival of kin assistance, limited as it may be, offers legislators a great opportunity to strengthen kinship ties, and to provide the necessary public supports that would enable kin to continue to carry some of the burden of assistance.

CHANGES IN THE LIFE CYCLE

One widely held myth about the past is that the timing of family transitions was once more orderly and stable than it is today. The complexity that governs family life today and the variations in family roles and in transitions into them are frequently contrasted to this more placid past. The historical experience, however, reveals precisely the opposite condition; patterns of family timing in the past were often more complex, more diverse, and less orderly than they are today. In reality, the demographic changes since the late 19th century have resulted in greater uniformity in the timing of transitions along the life course.

The full impact of changes in family life can be best understood in the context of demographic changes affecting the timing of marriage, parenthood, the "empty nest" and widowhood. These demographic trends have also contributed to changing age configurations of family members and relations between generations.

One of the major demographic forces affecting family has been the steady decline in the birth rate. The American birthrate has been going down steadily since the early nineteenth century, except for the bay boom in the immediate post-World War II period. Between 1810 and 1930 the birthrate declined from an average of 8 children per mother to less than 3.

This decline in the birthrate has had a profound impact on the timing of marriage, the birth of the first child and of subsequent children, and on the spacing of children. The family unit has become smaller, and the children are close to each other in age. Children growing up in small families are not exposed to the diversity in age among their siblings, as had been the case in earlier times, when families had five to six children ranging a wider age spectrum.

Contraception has also affected the meaning of marriage and of parenthood. In traditional society when procreation was a major goal of marriage, little time elapsed between marriage and parenthood. In modern society, contraception has made possible a gap between marriage and parenthood. Marriage has become recognized as important in its own right, rather than merely as a transition to parenthood.

Even more dramatic than the decline in fertility has been the decline in mortality. The decline in mortality combined with earlier marriage age have greatly improved the chances for the family unit to survive over a longer period. The increase in life expectancy, especially in the chances of survival to adulthood, has offered family members a greater opportunity to survive together over their joint lives. In contrast to past times, most children survive to adulthood together with their siblings and both parents. Grandparenthood, and more recently, great-grandparenthood have become widely experienced. Families are now able to go through a life course much less subject to sudden change and have a greater opportunity for continuity and stability in family life – except when disrupted by divorce.

The "typical" course of modern American families now includes early marriage and early commencement of childbearing, and few children close in age. Families following this type of life course experience a compact period of parenthood in the middle years of life, followed by an extended period, encompassing one-third of their adult life, without children; and finally often, by a period of solitary living following the death of a spouse, most frequently that of the husband.

In this type of sequence, husbands and wives are spending a relatively longer lifetime together; they invest a shorter segment of their lives in childrearing; and they more commonly survive to grandparenthood. This sequence has been uniform for the majority of the populations since the beginning of the 20th century. As Peter Uhlenberg has pointed out:

"The normal family cycle for women, a sequence of leaving home, marriage, child-bearing, child rearing, launching of children from the home, and survival to age 50 with the first marriage still intact, unless broken by divorce, has not been the typical pattern of family timing before the early 20th century."

Prior to 1900, only about 40% of the white female population in the United States experienced this ideal family pattern. The remainder either never survived to adulthood; or married, or were widowed while their offspring were still young children.

In the 19th century, the combination of a later age at marriage and higher fertility provided little opportunity for a family to experience an "empty nest" stage. Children were spread over a wide age range; frequently, the youngest child was just entering school as the oldest was preparing for marriage. The combination of later marriage, higher fertility, and widely spaced child-bearing resulted in a different life cycle pattern. Individuals became parents later, but carried child-rearing responsibilities almost until the end of their lives. Consequently, the lives of the parents overlapped with those of their children for a shorter duration than they do currently.

Under the demographic conditions of the 19th century—higher mortality and higher fertility—functions within the family were less specifically tied to age, and members of different age groups were consequently not so completely segregated by the tasks they were required to fill. The spread of children over a larger age spectrum within the family had important implications for family relationships, as well as for their preparations for adult roles. Children were accustomed to growing up with larger numbers of siblings and were exposed to a greater variety of role models than they would have been in a small nuclear family. Older children often took care of their younger siblings. Sisters, in particular, carried a major share of the responsibility for raising the younger children and they frequently acted as surrogate mothers if the mothers worked outside the home or had died.

On the other end of the life course, the "empty nest" marks a discontinuity in adult life, which had not been common in the past. The "empty nest" now encompasses one third or more of the married adult life span. Earlier marriage, and earlier child-bearing, having fewer children, and earlier launching of children from the home, combined with the extension of life in the later years, have led to the couple's experience of a "empty nest" while they are still in middle age, and to a higher proportion of a woman's life being spent, first, with a husband but without children, and then alone, without either husband or children. Women's tendency to survive men has resulted in a protracted period of widowhood in the later years of life. Men, on other hand, because of lower life expectancy and a greater tendency to remarry in old age, normally remain married until death.

The "empty nest" is only partly a result of demographic factors. It is also a product of changing familial relations and values. Even in the nineteenth century the last child was old enough to leave home while the parents were still alive. Children stayed in the parental household not because they were too young to move out. At least one child stayed home, because of an obligation to support aging parents. Today, on the other hand, children leave home when the parents are still in middle age, without any expectation that they would return home to assist their parents in the later years of life. A separation between the generations occurs now early in the parents' lives, thus, contributing further to age segregation in the society.

The"empty nest" has experienced recently a slight reversal, as young people have begun to return the parental home, because of limited employment opportunities and housing shortage. This pattern is, however, drastically different from that of the nineteenth century: In the past, children gave up outside opportunities and remained at home in order to help their parents. Today they return home because of lack of opportunity in the society.

The overall historical pattern has thus been marked by a shift from family members' involuntary to voluntary control of the timing of family events. It has also been characterized by greater rigidity and uniformity in the timing people's passage through the expected family roles over their lives. For example, young people's transitions into adult roles—leaving home, getting married and the establishment of a separate household—now follow a more orderly sequence and are being accomplished over a shorter time period today than they were in the 19th century.

Prior to the beginning of this century life transitions were timed in accordance with family needs and obligations rather than by what was considered the "proper" age. Over the past few decades, on the other hand, age norms have emerged as more important determinants of timing than familial obligations. As John Modell and his associates have remarked: " 'Timely' action to 19th century families consisted of helpful response in times of trouble; in the 20th century, timeliness connotes adherence to a socially-sanctioned schedule."

The changes in the family cycle discussed above, such as the emergence of the "empty nest" extensions of the periods of widowhood, and increasing age segregation in the family and the larger society, reflect major discontinuities in the life cycle of the family and the individual. Some of these changes have resulted in increasing disruptions in the middle and later years of life.

DIVORCE AND SINGLE PARENTHOOD

The increase in the divorce rate and the concomitant rise in single-parent households represent a dramatic transition in family life in our times. From the mid-1960's half of all marriages contracted are likely to end up in divorce. Even though the divorce rate has stabilized in the mid-1970's, its effects on the emergence of single-parent households, most of whom are headed by females and struggling with poverty, is all too visible. Divorce now disrupts as many families as death once did. Seen, however, from a historical perspective, the high divorce rate does not pose as great a threat to the family as is generally assumed. Divorce is now more prevalent and more visible, because legal forms and changes in public opinion have made it more acceptable to end a marriage by divorce. By contrast, in the 19th century people did not resort to divorce as frequently as they do now, because it was considered socially unacceptable. This does not mean, however, that all families were living happily and in harmony. Desertion and separation was the common panacea for marital conflict. Incompatible couples who did not resort to divorce or separation often lived together as strangers or in deep conflict.

Thus, the increase in divorce statistics as such is not proof that the contemporary family is likely to go out of existence. In some respects, it is proof that people care enough about the contents and quality of family life and marriage to be willing to dissolve an unsatisfactory marriage, and replace it with a more successful one.

Since a major proportion of divorces are followed by remarriage (more so for men than for women), the family system itself persists, despite the traumatic effects on the individuals experiencing divorce. In many instances, remarriage has led to the formation of "blended families", which in different ways represent various forms of resilience and adaptation to new family styles. While on the one hand, divorce disrupts kinship ties for the couple, it also leads to the emergence of new configurations of kin, as a result of remarriage. From the point of view of children, divorce sometimes results in the gaining of a new kinship network through a parent's remarriage, without the loss of the original kin.

From a long-term perspective, the major concern for the future needs of the family does not revolve around divorce as such, but rather around the economic and social needs of single-parent families (the majority of which are headed by women). An important challenge to family policy is the creation of adequate living environments for these families and of decent employment and childcare supports for the mothers, many of whom are almost the sole supports of their children.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE

A historical perspective on the changes over the past century provides a context for the understanding of family life today. There is no question that American families have been undergoing important transformations over the past century. But the main question is: do these changes represent family breakdown? Do they threaten the disappearance of the family? Some of these changes, such as the decline in the birth rate, earlier age at marriage, decline in mortality, and changes in the life cycle are all the result of a continuing process of change over the past two centuries. More dramatic recent developments are the high divorce rate, the increase in the proportion of households headed by single mothers, solitary residence, and the isolation of older people.

Although the emergence of "old age" has been part of a continuing historical process, it is only over the past decade that the problems of older people, and especially the dimensions of an "aging society" have become dramatically visible. Older people, especially widows and divorced women are experiencing increasing social isolation. The problem of caring for aging parents affects the entire family. It places middle aged people, especially women, in a "life cycle squeeze" where they are caught between the need to care for their own children and their aging parents, while also working full time. Age segregation has been a continuing trend in American society, and one which will become more dramatic, as successive age groups enter "old age".

The welfare responsibilities toward young children, on the one hand, and toward older people, on the other hand, have often been viewed as tradeoffs in terms of policy investment. In reality, however, both the needs of children and the elderly require an integrated family policy, which should focus on the family as a unit, strengthening its capacity to care for its children as well as older members.

The prevailing anxiety over the future of the family stems, in part, from the tension between idealized expectations about the family in American culture and reality itself. Nostalgia for a lost family tradition that has never existed, has prejudiced our understanding of the changes that families are experiencing in contemporary society. Thus, the current anxiety over the fate of the family reflects not merely realistic problems in the family, but a variety of concerns about other social crises which are projected onto the family.

These anxieties also reflect the difficulties that American society has been experiencing in accepting a greater diversity in family life and in tolerating alternative family styles. The American family is not breaking down, as is often suggested. Rather, the family faces difficulties in its adaptation to recent social changes.

The idealization of the family as a refuge from the outside world has also handicapped its ability to cope with rapid social change and with problems in the community. The continuous emphasis on the family as a private retreat and as an emotional haven is misguided in light of our knowledge of the past. Originally, the family fulfilled a broad array of functions that were intertwined with the larger community. Rather than being the custodian of privacy, the family interacted with the larger society and served the community. By contrast, one of the major sources of the crisis of nuclear families today is its difficulties in adapting to the emotional isolation in which it finds itself, precisely because of the artificial boundary between individuals and the community.

Concentration on the emotional functions of the family has grown at the expense of another of its much needed roles in a complex, modern society, namely its influence on educational and welfare agencies. The tendency of the family to shelter its members from other social institutions has weakened the family's ability to affect its structure or to influence the programs and legislation that public agencies have directed at the family.

Attitudes towards family life in American society have been governed too often by stereotypes of the "ideal family", which are based on the middle-class nuclear family. In reality, American society has contained within it great varieties in family types and family behavior that were infused through the recurring entrance of new immigrant groups. Ethnic, racial, and class differences are reflected in a great diversity in family behavior. This tension between the ideals of family behavior imposed by the dominant culture and the traditional patterns of black families and of immigrant families has been a recurring issue in American life.

As part of the "melting pot" process there has been initially a tendency toward homogenization of American culture, and with it, an increasing emphasis on uniformity in family behavior. Immigrants, primarily in the second generation, adopted "American" family patterns in several areas, such as earlier marriage and limiting their family size, withdrawal of wives from the labor force, and changing styles of consumption and tastes. However, this ongoing process did not result in a total assimilation of family ways and traditional customs, because new waves of immigrants have tended to bring with them traditional family patterns.

It is therefore unrealistic to talk simply about *the* American family. Until very recently, the stereotype of the private nuclear family as the ideal family in American society has been dominant. Alternative forms of family organization, such as those of various ethnic families, were misinterpreted as "family disorganization" because they did not conform to the official stereotype. But actually over the past decade, the strength and resilience of ethnic families has been recognized. These traditional resources of family and kinship among certain ethnic groups have been rediscovered as the middle-class nuclear family, besieged by its own isolation, has proven its limitations in coping with stress.

One of the most unique features of American families today is their cultural and ethnic diversity; a diversity, which is in itself a continuation of a historical pattern, and which is now being valued as a source of strength and continuity, rather than being decried as a manifestation of deviance. The challenges faced by individuals and policy makers today is the creative adaptation of these family patterns to cope with contemporary problem.

An acknowledgement of family strengths and diversity is the first step towards the creation of a family policy. One should not be misguided by the resilience and strengths that families have demostrated in face of adversity, as signs that families can continue to cope without public support.

A creative family policy is needed, therefore, in order to support the family's efforts to meet its obligations in both directions of the life cycle—for children and for the elderly. Such a policy must be integrated and meet the needs of different age groups, of men and women, of widows and of working mothers. It also must address the cultural diversity in family life in American society. Policy planning can recover certain models from the past and adapt them to contemporary needs. For example, the historic traditions of exchange and mutual assistance between generations could be recovered and integrated into family focused programs.

The United States has never had an integrated policy aimed directly at the family. Most programs were intended for individuals, in specific age groups, rather than at the family unit itself. An overall policy can help the family to realize its full potential and to empower it to carry its responsibilities towards its members and serve the community.

Mr. COATS. Dr. Cherlin. Let me just remind the panelists that we operating under a time constraint, and we do have copies of your statements. I don't want to take anything away from you because all of your testimony is valuable; but if you could summarize your main points, it would allow us more time for questioning.

STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. CHERLIN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, BALTIMORE, MD

Mr. CHERLIN. Thank you, Mr. Coats.

There are considerable strengths of American families and those of us who study American families often tend to overlook them. But, for example, we are still very strongly attached to the institution of marriage in this country.

I just came back from an international conference where a European demographer estimated that in countries like France and Italy, only about 7 out of 10 young women will be married, and only about 6 out of 10 women will be marrying during their lives in countries like Sweden. Here in the United States, still nearly 9 out of 10 young women will be marrying.

We are, and we remain, the most marriage-prone society in the West. Unfortunately, we are also the most divorce-prone society in the West. You have heard from Professor Hareven about divorce. You have heard about it before. At current rates, about half of all American marriages would end in divorce.

But the story doesn't stop there as we have seen today already. Although remarriage rates have been declining some, most people who get divorced remarry. In fact, I estimate that at current rates, about one-third of all the young adults today will marry, and then divorce, and then remarry during their lifetimes. So we are going to see an enormous growth of the kind of blended family which we heard from earlier this morning.

It is my firm opinion, after studying the American family in detail, that the changes we have seen—changes such as divorce, such as married women working outside the home—are here to stay, for better or worse. Whether it is good or not, I don't see much of reversal, because of the kinds of long-term historical trends that Professor Hareven has described.

So it seems to me, then, that what we have now is three different types of families in America—families with children, that is. The first type is very familiar—it is the family consisting of two parents, both of whom are married once. And as table 1 in my written testimony shows, that is still the most common form of family.

About 61 percent of all children in the United States in 1980 were living with two natural, once-married parents.

Now the strengths of these families are pretty obvious. With two parents to share the responsibilities of making a living and raising children, the family's tasks can be performed more easily.

I would like to make a distinction, however, among those families, according to whether the wife is working outside the home. Mothers who aren't employed outside the home, and who devote their efforts to child care, are, of course, an important source of the strength of American families. I think that we sometimes fail to recognize the valuable services they continue to perform.

But working parents also spend a great deal of time and effort caring for their children. You heard the efforts of the Horne family just a few minutes ago, about how hard it was for them to find satisfactory child care arrangements.

To me, perhaps the most dramatic example of the great efforts that working couples go through to find satisfactory child care, is the surprisingly high prevalence of shift work. Sociologist Harriet Presser at the University of Maryland has been studying this. She finds that among all dual earner couples—both the wife and husband are working full time, and who have children—in about one-third of those cases, at least one spouse works other than a day shift. It seems likely that many of those couples have rearranged their lives so that they can still provide care for their children.

In fact, when you look closely at child care statistics for working couples, you find that parents and relatives provide a lot of the care. In fact, even fathers help out. Of the wives who are employed full time, 13 percent who had children under 5 in 1982, said that their husband was the principal caretaker of the child while they were working. Of wives who work part time, 23 said as much. All told, 48 percent of the young children of wives employed full time, and 64 percent of the young children of wives employed part time, were cared for by a family member.

So there are clearly some very strong and continuing family strengths here. There is a family support system that works even for these dual earner couples. But often it is difficult for them. It is difficult for them to provide satisfactory care and to make satisfactory arrangements. I would like to see us find ways of building the strength that exists there.

The second family form is the single parent family, usually consisting of a mother and her children. As table 1 shows, about one out of five children lives in a single mother family. Because these single mothers have limited economic resources, they often have to rely on their families for support.

Now, along with Frank Furstenberg at the University of Pennsylvania, I have just finished a national study of grandparents. It turns out that a lot of those grandparents have a daughter who has gotten divorced. When that has occurred, in 3 out of 10 cases, the grandparents have told us that the daughters move back home for a while. And in 6 out of 10 cases, the grandparents told us that they have given financial support to the daughter.

Grandparents' function is to be something of a family watchdog, or family insurance policy, who step in when there is a problem in the home.

The third family form is the family of remarriage. I am very glad that you had a blended family here today. These families can be quite complicated, as we have seen, with two or three sets of children, and with links to noncustodial parents living elsewhere. They are very complex and they don't get the attention I think they deserve. The table in my testimony shows that about 9 percent of all children live with a mother and a stepfather, and another 11 percent live with two natural parents, at least one of whom has been married more than once.

Now, these stepparents can be in a very ambiguous situation. They lack clear guidelines as to how they should develop their relationship with their stepchildren, especially if there is a father in the next block who is also relating to those children.

My research on families of remarriage has shown me how hard these families work to create one strong family unit.

Many people refer to these families as blended families. But the blending doesn't occur automatically just because a marriage takes place. Instead, successful stepfamilies consciously work at becoming a family. They work hard at becoming a family, much more so than those of us in first marriages. I think that is very clear from what we heard earlier today when Mrs. Davis said, "We take this job seriously"; and when she said, "We work hard at it, and we enjoy our triumphs."

It seems to me the fact that millions of Americans have undertaken the task of building a blended family shows once again the importance of family ties.

In sum, let me just leave you with the thought that we don't any longer have one dominant type of family in this country; rather, we have several forms—and for better or worse, that is the way it is likely to say. But Americans remain deeply committed to family life and their families continue to be a centrally important source of support and satisfaction.

Thank you.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Andrew J. Cherlin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. CHERLIN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, BALTIMORE, MD

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today concerning the diversity and strengths of Americn families. The strengths are considerable, but they often are overlooked by those of us who study the problems of family life. Despite the upheavals of recent decades, marriage and the family remain a strong source of support and satisfaction for Americans. Despite the recent increases in divorce and cohabitation, nearly nine out of ten young adults will eventually marry. To be sure, rates of marriage are down from the peaks of the 1950s, but we are still the most marriage-prone society in the West. I recently returned from an international conference in which a leading European demographer estimated that, at current rates, only about seven out of ten young women would ever marry in countries such as France and italy, and less than six out of ten would ever marry in Scandinavia. The rest would cohabit with one or more partners without ever marrying. In comparison with Europe, then, our commitment to the institution of marriage remains strong. And if I'm not mistaken, our nation has had higher levels of marriage and an earlier average age at marriage throughout most of its existence compared to Western Europe. What's most noteworthy about the American marriage rate is not that it has declined somewhat from the unique period of the 1950s but rather that it remains so high.

When Americans are asked about their family lives in national surveys, they declare its continuing importance. Several national surveys show that marriage and parenthood are a more central source of satisfaction with life than either work or leisure pursuits.[1] In the 1985 General Social Survey of the adult population of the U.S., conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, 77 percent said that they received "a very great deal" or "a great deal" of satisfaction with their family lives, and only four percent said they received "a little" or "none." This is a higher level of satisfaction than was expressed with respect to friendships, leisure activities, place of residence, or health. In the 1984 General Social Survey, 57 percent of all married persons said they were "very happy" with their marriages, 40 percent said they were "pretty happy," and only three percent said they were "not too happy." We tend to ignore these expressions of the importance of family life to Americans and the great satisfaction most derive from it.

But as everyone knows, there have been sharp changes in the American family over the past few decades. The other side of our commitment to the institution of marriage is our increasing acceptance of divorce. We not only marry more than people in many other Western countries, we divorce more too. Between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s, the divorce rate doubled. Since then, the rate has been relatively stable and there even are indications that it may have declined slightly in the last few years. At current rates, nearly half of all marriages will end in divorce. But the story doesn't stop there: Although remarriage rates have been declining somewhat, it is still true that most divorced persons eventually remarry. At current rates, about one-third of all young adults will marry, divorce, and then marry again.[2] Another wel-known change has been the increase in married women with preschool-aged children who work outside the home. About half now do so, as compared to only about one out of ten in 1950.

It is my firm opinion, after studying the American Family in detail, that whether these changes are for the better or for the worse, they are here to stay. Because of long-term historical trends of the type Professor Hareven has described, we are unlikely to return to a society with a low divorce rate and few married women working outside the home.

The result, then, of these seemingly irreversible changes is that there are now three major forms of families with children, each with its own set of strengths and vulnerabilities. The first form is the most familiar: the family of first marriage, in which there are two parents, both married once. This is still the most common form, despite the growth of other types of families. As Table 1 shows, 61 percent of all children in the U.S. in 1980 (excluding the small proportion who were not living with their mothers) were living with two natural, once-married parents. With two parents to share the responsibilities of making a living and raising children, the family's tasks can be performed more easily.

TABLE 1.—PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING IN VARIOUS FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS, AMONG ALL U.S. CHILDREN WHO WERE LIVING WITH THEIR MOTHERS IN 1980[1]

	Total	White	Black
Two natural parents, both married once	61	66	27
Two natural parents, one or both married more than once	11	12	8
Mother and stepfather	9	9	12
Mother only	19	14	54
Total	100	101	101

[1] Percentage may not add to 100 due to rounding error.

Source: Larry Bumpass, "Some Characteristics of Children's Second Families," American Journal of Sociology 90 (November 1984), 608–23. Percentages are derived from the June 1980 Current Population Survey carried out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

A further distinction can be made among these first-marriage families according to whether the wife is working outside the home. But it is important to remember that women (and, to a lesser extent, men) move in and out of the labor force, altering their work behavior according to opportunities and family responsibilities. Consequently, current statistics that show that a majority of married mothers are working at any one time actually underestimate the proportion who ever work while their children are young. In our own minds, we tend to think of housewives and working mothers as two distinct groups, but there's a great overlap between them as women move in and out of the work force or take part-time jobs.

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[1] See, for example, Joseph Veroff, Elizabeth Douvan, and Richard A. Kulka, "The Inner American: A Self-Portrait From 1957 to 1976" (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

[2] Andrew J. Cherlin, "Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

Mothers who aren't employed outside the home and who devote their efforts to child rearing are, of course, an important source of strength to their families. We sometimes fail to recognize the valuable services they perform. But working parents also spend a great deal of time and effort caring for their children. They try hard to be good parents and good employees at the same time. Perhaps the most dramatic example of the great efforts they make is the surprisingly high prevalence of shift work. Sociologist Harriet B. Presser has found that among full-time, dual earner couples with children, about one-third included at least one spouse who worked other than a regular day schedule.[3] It seems likely that many of these couples have rearranged their work lives so they can still provide care for their children. In fact, parents and relatives provide much of the care for the children of working couples. Fathers help out in surprising numbers: 13 percent of wives who were employed full-time and who had children under five reported in 1982 that their husband was the principle caretaker, as did 23 percent of wives who worked part-time. All told, 48 percent of the young children of wives employed full-time and 64 percent of the young children of wives employed part-time were cared for by a family member.[4]

The second family form is the single-parent family, usually consisting of a mother and her children. As Table 1 shows, about one out of five children lives in a single-mother family. Because many single mothers have limited economic resources, they often rely on their families for support. For example, Frank Furstenberg and I recently completed a national study of grandparents, many of whom had a daughter who had become divorced. In three out of ten cases, the daughter moved back in with her parents at least temporarily after a divorce. In six out of ten cases, the parents provided some financial support. It is also wellknown that single mothers try to develop networks of family and friends that they can call upon for mutual assistance if a child is sick, or the house needs repair, or an overdue bill needs to be paid. Without the help of these networks, single parents would have an even more difficult time managing the double burden of supporting and raising children. Yet not all single mothers successfully develop support networks, and even if they do, the other members often are as needy. Despite substantial family assistance, therefore, many single mothers cannot compensate for their precarious economic position.

The third family form is the family of remarriage. These families can be quite complicated, with two or three sets of children and with links to noncustodial parents living elsewhere. About 9 percent of all children, as Table 1 shows, live with a mother and stepfather and another 11 percent live with two natural parents, at least one of whom has been married before. What's more, stepparents can be in an ambiguous position, lacking clear guidelines as to the kind of relationship they should develop with their stepchildren. My research on families of remarriage has shown me how hard these family members work to create one strong unit. many people refer to families of remarriages as "blended families," but the blending doesn't occur just because a marriage takes place. Those involved must consciously work at becoming a family much more so than people in first marriages. That millions of Americans have undertaken the task of building a blended family shows once again the importance of family ties.

In sum, we no longer have one dominant type of family in this country; rather we have several forms. But Americans remain committed to family life and their families continue to be a centrally important source of support and satisfaction.

Mr. COATS. Dr. Stinnett.

STATEMENT OF NICK STINNETT, DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY, PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES, CA

Mr. STINNETT. Good morning. I want to begin by congratulating this committee on your leadership and vision in looking at this very important topic.

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[3] Harriet B. Presser and Virginia Cain, "Shift work among dual-earner couples with children," Science 219 (Feb. 18, 1983).

[4] U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Child care arrangements of working mothers: June 1982," Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

Recent surveys have indicated that the majority of Americans feel that the family is one of the most important aspects of their lives. In fact, a recent Harris poll has found that in response to the question, What is most important in life? Ninety-six percent have said to have a good family life.

We also have much evidence that many of our social problems—crime, delinquency, drug abuse, alcohol abuse—are related to poor relationships in the family. Throughout history, we have examples that the strength of a nation is closely linked to the strength of the family.

There is little doubt, either from research or from common sense, that our well-being, whether as individuals, communities, schools, or nations, is greatly influenced by the quality of family life.

Now, we have come to the question: What are the characteristics of a strong family? It was this question that we sought to answer when we launched the family strengths research project more than 10 years ago. During that time we have done several national studies. We have done some studies in some other countries as well. We have researched approximately 3,000 strong families in every part of the Nation. We have looked at strong black families; we have looked at other ethnic groups. We have looked at first-marriage, two-parents with children-type families. We have also researched strong single-parent families and strong remarried families.

We feel that these families have shared with us a lot of knowledge and wisdom based on their experiences, which gives us a pretty good picture of strong families. I would like to share these with you.

The 3,000 strong families that we researched were found to share six major qualities. Now, these were not the only qualities that they had, they had many other qualities, too. But these six qualities were the major qualities, and they were the ones that we found consistently over and over in our studies.

These strong families were found to have, first of all, a great deal of commitment.

No. 2, they were found to express a great deal of appreciation to each other. They build each other up, psychologically. They can see strengths in each other. They respond to each other in terms of those strengths that they have. They build on each other's strengths.

No. 3, they have very good communication patterns.

Four, they spend a great deal of time together. They do a lot of activities together. This does not just happen; they make it happen.

Spiritual wellness is another quality that we found that these families have, which manifests itself, among other things, by a genuine concern for others; a sense of purpose in life; and a feeling of being part of something larger than themselves.

The sixth quality was that these families have the ability to deal with crisis and stress in positive ways.

Now, these are not ideal, unreal families. They are families much like all of us. There were many in our studies who had not been strong at one point; who had been very weak at one point in their lives, and had become strong. They had dealt with some great stresses, crises.

So we have from these families the knowledge that weak families, so to speak, can become strong families; or low strength families can become stronger families; and strong families can become stronger.

The six characteristics of these strong families are simple, yet they are very powerful. They form an effective framework for family enrichment programs, educational endeavors, and the making of policy affecting families.

I have had to cover these qualities very quickly because of time limitations. If you would like to know more about our research results, we have the research results, and many stories, and case materials, plus some practical suggestions for building stronger families, which are published in the book "Secrets of Strong Families," which is published by Little, Brown & Co.

It has been suggested that a fundamental step in strengthening families is that we must recognize the family as a primary social unit of our society. We must see the well-being of families as essential to national well-being. Until we do that, we are not going to be very successful in strengthening families, no matter how many programs we have. We first must do this.

With this in mind, we would like to advocate a campaign to promote a positive national attitude toward families, an attitude that families are important.

I congratulate you, this committee, on taking a giant step in that direction.

A few policy recommendations that I would just share very briefly, are:

No. 1, that we take more of a preventive approach, put more effort into preventive programs rather than concentrating entirely on remedial programs. I think this will enhance the quality of life; it will save a lot of human suffering, and in the long run, I think can also be less expensive in terms of finances.

Another policy that I would share is something that many of you are concerned about, is a call for family-oriented personnel policies such as flexitime, shared, and part-time jobs with benefits, transfer and leave policies that take family welfare into consideration. As has already been mentioned this morning, some major changes could be made in tax codes to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, revise some inheritance tax laws, recognize homemakers, and so forth.

I would like to mention that if there were only one policy recommendation that we could make that it would be this: a systematic analysis of all laws, regulations, and rules concerning their impact on families.

Another recommendation would be support for a national educational program, emphasizing relationship skills, communication skills, and preparation for family living. Much could be done in this type of program in elementary and high schools.

When we ask ourselves the questions: Where do children learn how to deal with stress, how to resolve conflict? Where do children learn the basic principles of good human relationships which are so important, not only to family strengths, but to success in careers, success in life in general.

I think we come up with some disturbing answers to that.

One other policy recommendation would be more programs where we expose vulnerable and at-risk families to information and to positive models of relationships, and to positive models of family life. An example is the Parent Aide Support Service in Lincoln, NE, which matches parents who have been classified as abusive and neglectful parents with parent aides who are volunteers.

One of the purposes of this is to facilitate the learning of more positive parenting skills. But another major thrust of this program is to provide these parents with a positive, genuine, human relationship with this aide. This has been a very successful program, and I think largely because of the caring relationship with a person who truly is concerned, and is a friend.

They have found that of the parents who are in this program, over 90 percent do not repeat in terms of child abuse or neglect. So it is a very successful program. There are other types of things that we could do like this.

The other thing that I would recommend is a family exchange program on an international basis. I think improving family life in our country poses a promise of better times for us, and improving family life in other countries holds promise of better times for those countries and for the world. We live in a very small world today. I think we cannot ignore the international scene, and I think we all agree on that.

But if we, for example, had an opportunity for American families to meet and interact with families from other countries, such as Russia and China, in an exchange program, perhaps this could lead us a step further toward peace.

That is all I have to share at this time. I appreciate again the work of this committee.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Chairman **Miller** [presiding]. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Nick Stinnett follows:]

Prepared Statement of Nick Stinnett, Dean, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA

IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY FAMILIES

National polls such as the Gallup poll and Harris poll periodically ask the questions, "What is most important in life?" What is the most common answer? Money? Health? Beauty? Fame? Power? No. In a 1981 Harris poll, 96 percent said to have a good family life. And in a 1982 Gallup poll, eight of every ten people said family was one of the most of the most important facet of their lives.

Why do millions of Americans today report that one of their most important goals in life is a successful family life? No doubt, one reason is that we experience our most intimate relationships within the family and these intimate relationships have great power to influence our happiness and total wellness as individuals. Perhaps we instinctively know that when we come to the bottom line in life it's not money, career, fame, a fine house, land, or material possessions that are important. What matters are the people who love and care for us. People who are committed to us and on whom we can count for support and help are truly important. Nowhere is the potential for the love, support, caring and commitment for which we all yearn greater than in the family.

We also realize the value of healthy families to our communities and our nations. We know that poor relationships within the family are related to many of the problems (for example, teen pegnancies; drug and alcohol abuse; child, spouse and elder abuse, depression; delinquency) of society.

Throughout history the family has been vital to the well-being—the survival—of individuals and of nations. If you think that sounds like a grandiose, sweeping statement, consider for a moment the pattern that has been observed in the rise and fall of great societies, such as those of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. When these nations were at the peak of their power, glory, and prosperity, the family was highly valued and strong. In a similar manner, the quality of family life and the strength of the nation deteriorated simultaneously.

Obviously, then, we can expect to benefit as a nation when we make efforts to improve family life. How do we strengthen families? We began by conducting extensive research to determine what strong families are like. We believed that healthy, successful, strong families would be the best "experts" to consult. And over the past decade, we have had the pleasure to have personal and professional contact with thousands of such families. They are from all walks of life, all faiths, all colors, some rich and some not so rich. They come from almost every state in the nation, and from many foreign countries.

From these strong families we have learned that strong families are pleasant, positive places to live because folks in them have learned some beneficial ways of treating each other. Family members can count on each other for support, love, and loyalty. They talk to each other; they enjoy each other.

Members of strong families feel good about themselves as a family unit; they have a sense of belonging with each other–a sense of "we." At the same time no individual gets lost or smothered; each family member is encouraged to develop his or her potential. Strong families are able to survive the inevitable crises that come their way. They unite to meet challenges; they are effective problem solvers. They pull together to pull through. Strong families can concisely be defined as places we enter for comfort, development, and regeneration and places from which we go forth renewed and charged with power for positive living.

THE SIX QUALITIES OF STRONG FAMILIES

With the help of thousands of people, then we have an excellent idea of what a strong family is and how it nurtures positive approaches to life together. One of the amazing things about the research is that six qualities were mentioned time and time again.

We noted these qualities in the original research in Oklahoma; we found these same characteristics in the nationwide studies of strong families, representing various ethnic and socio-economic groups. And in spite of cultural, political, and language differences, the strong families we have investigated outside the United States are very similar. The three thousand strong families we researched were found to share six major qualities.

Commitment is the foundation on which strong families build. Commitment in these families goes in two directions. Each family member is valued; each is supported and sustained. At the same time they are committed to the family as a unit. They have a sense of being a team; they have a family identity and unity. When outside pressures (work, for example) threathen to remove family from its top priority, members of strong families take action and make sacrifices if necessary to preserve family well-being.

Liberal amounts of *Appreciation* do much to make strong families pleasant and positive. By genuine compliments, these folks help each other feel good about themselves. Self-esteem is bolstered.

It came as no surprise to us that strong families have good *Communication* skills. They spend lots of time talking and listenting. As a result of their communication, family members feel closer and less isolated. Effective communication skills help when conflicts are out in the open; they attack the problem (rather than each other).

Strong families spend lots of *Time together*. They recognize that relationships need quality time in generous amounts to flourish. These families eat, work, play, and talk together. When faced with outside demands on their time and energy, they eliminate obligations and involvements so that time with family is not lost.

Spiritual wellness is illustrated by the strong families as a unifying force that enables them to reach out in love and compassion to others. It is a force that helps them transcend self and become part of something larger. For many, the yearnings of their spiritual nature are expressed by membership in an organized religious body such as a church, synagogue, or temple. For others spirituality manifests a concern for others, involvement in worthy cases, or adherence to a moral code.

Because they live in the same real world as everyone else, strong families face difficulties and troubles. A crtical difference is that they are able to *Cope effectively with crises*. Some of their coping skills are seeing something positive in the crises, pulling together, being flexible, drawing on spiritual and communication strengths, and getting help from friends and professionals.

The six characteristics of strong families are very simple yet powerful. They form an effective framework for family enrichment programs, educational endeavors and the making of policy affecting families. I have had to cover these qualities very quickly because of time limitations. If you would like to know more, our research results, including many stories and case materials plus practical suggestions for building stronger families, are published in "Secrets of Strong Families" (Little, Brown, and Company, 1986).

Please do not feel that I am mounting a political soap box. I am not. The task of building strong families transcends political boundaries and inclinations. It is a challenge we share regardless of political affiliation.

It has been suggested that one of the fundamentals in building strong families is a recognition of family as the primary social unit of our society. We must see the well-being of families as essential to national well-being. With this in mind we advocate a campaign to promote a positive national attitude toward families. I congratulate this committee on taking a giant step in that direction; I thank you for your efforts on behalf of families. Hearings like this and forums such as the White House Conference on Families serve to focus attention on families and to underscore their importance.

Having convinced policymakers of the importance of family, specific changes will follow naturally. Some that deserve prompt attention include:

A call for family-oriented personnel policies such as flextime, shared and part-time jobs with benefits, transfer and leave policies that take family welfare into consideration. Flextime and shared part-time employment allow families to manage time to fit family schedules. Some companies have discontinued automatic transfers because those disrupt family life;

Major changes in tax codes to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, revise inheritance taxes and recognize homemakers;

Reform of social security to eliminate biases against families, marriage, homemakers. I learned last week of a gentleman of 103 who has had a live-in ladyfriend for 30 years. They would prefer to marry but would lose benefits;

A systematic analysis of all laws, regulations and rules for their impact on families;

Increased pressure on media to curb excess violence, sex stereotypes, and excessive negative portrayal of family; and

Incorporate applicable portions of the characteristics of strong families into a character education curriculum.

A second fundamental approach is an increased effort to prevent family dissolution. The realities of modern life are that family dissolution does happen and we should not take a negative approach to those families. However, several specific actions might help to prevent family breakup:

Support for a national educational program emphasizing relationship skills, communication skills, and preparation for family living. This program could be done in the elementary and high schools;

Efforts to require premarital counseling or education of persons under age 18 before they are granted a marriage license. Persons who marry very early have a much higher divorce rate;

Required counseling before divorce action can proceed and/or the use of family conciliation/mediation facilities for the settlement of family-related issues such as child custody and support difficulties. Mediation/conciliation emphasizes problem-solving rather than a "crime and punishment" approach;

New efforts to prevent alcohol and drug abuse;

Support for family violence prevention efforts and services; and

Continued action to prevent and deal with adolescent pregnancy.

The third fundamental in the building of family strengths is the promotion of family self-sufficiency and independence. The needs of poor families; broken families; and families with problems such as abuse, runaways, handicapped or aging members must be considered. Often these families can do quite well with assistance that encourages self-sufficiency. Some specific suggestions include:

Involvement of families in family support services and self-help efforts. Head Start, for example, has a parent education component that benefits child and parents;

Encourage home care and independence of the elderly. Many elderly can remain in their own homes if they receive some supplemental services such as meal service, handyman or housekeeping, transportation, or visiting nurse. Older persons who are more frail might be cared for by their children if similar services and respite care were available. Tax policies to encourage home care;

Increased public awareness and sensitivity toward persons with handicapping conditions. Enforcement of existing laws preventing discrimination;

Greater assistance to families with a handicapped member in the form of tax credit and financial assistance;

Promote a variety of childcare choices-home, community, and center-based care; and

Exposure of vulnerable and at-risk families to information and to positive models of family life. The Parent Aide Support Service in Lincoln, Nebraska matches abusive and neglectful parents with "model" parent aides. They meet on an informal basis, working out opportunities to participate in activities together as their interests lead them. In time the abusive/neglectful parents begin to act like the parent aide even though no formal parent education occurs.

As a final suggestion, I propose that we also expand our horizons. Modern technology has made our world so small that we can no longer ignore families around the world. Improving family life in our country holds a promise of better times for us. And improving families in other parts of the world promises better times for their countries and for the world. Maybe, too, if we had an opportunity to let American families meet and interact with Soviet and Chinese families (like an exchange program), we would discover a path to peach on earth.

I am optimistic about the future of American families. They have a lot to offer. I appreciate the work of this committee and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

Chairman **MILLER**. Ms. Beatty.

STATEMENT OF LULA BEATTY, PROJECT DIRECTOR, MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH, HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. **BEATTY**. Good morning. I would like to add my congratulations to you for convening this hearing.

My purpose in appearing before you today is to present to you some of the results of a study that we conducted on strong black, two-parent and single-mother families.

Before I describe the study and highlight those findings, we consider to be especially valuable for your consideration, I want to share with you some of the reasons we believe it is important to examine strengths in families.

First, we receive many requests from community organizations, researchers, and other professionals for information on healthy black family life. These people are often attempting to respond to problems in their community, and want information that will assist them in doing so in a constructive way.

Second, mental health researchers and practitioners are increasingly documenting and asserting the role of the family in both preventing and treating mental health and social problems.

Third, black communities are facing some severe problems. Social problems such as teenage pregnancy and unemployment, alcoholism, depression, poverty, and school failure, for example, are disproportionately more likely to affect black families. These problems enormously burden and endanger the well-being of black children and families.

Information on how black families successfully cope with or avoid some of these problems is needed. For these reasons and others, we embarked on a program of research that would address these concerns in a way that would be instructive to others. With support from the Commission for Racial Justice of the United

Church of Christ, a research study was conducted to discover the attributes and coping styles of strong black families.

One of the most difficult aspects of our research was to define strong families. After examining past work and theories, including the work of Dr. Stinnett, we concluded that family strength is not contingent on family structure; that is, strong families can exist in many forms. Therefore, we would expect to find strong families among single mother, single father, and two-parent homes, for example, just as we know that dysfunctional or weak families exist in two-parent households.

Moreover, we also assumed that strong families would not be families without problems; rather, strong families would be those that successfully coped with problems. For our study we decided to include strong families from the two types of families most common in black communities: two-parent and single mother-headed households.

So we interviewed 50 families from the Washington, DC, area who were nominated by community groups because of the perceived strength and stability of the families.

In capsule form, I want to present to you some of our findings.

First, the group as a whole was economically viable. The couples had incomes above the national median for black and white families, and the single mothers had incomes above the national median for black families. The majority were employed, including the wives, so in most of these two-parent families, both spouses worked. A third of the single women held second jobs. Over 50 percent of the respondents had completed college or graduate school. Over 90 percent of the couples, and almost half of the single women, owned their own homes. Family size tended to be small. Most of the family heads as children lived in two-parent homes. Very few families, however, came from childhood homes where there were a lot of socioeconomic advantages. They acquired the socioeconomic advantages on their own, and most probably with the support of others.

Second, one of the most revealing aspects of the study was the extent to which the strong families had experienced problems and expressed dissatisfaction with some areas of their lives. Problems with finances, marriages, and children were the most frequently cited; although, the extent to which these problems were experienced varied.

Single women generally reported higher rates of problems than did married men and women, except that married men reported more health problems.

Married couples did not vary much from each other in the extent to which they reported problems, except again in the case of health.

All respondents expressed more dissatisfaction with their jobs than other aspects of their lives. And single women, in comparison to the married couples, were more dissatisfied in all areas of their lives, particularly in regard to their jobs and neighborhoods.

Third, all families were internally resourceful; they reported a high number of talents and skills within their households. Interestingly, all reported skills in tutoring, counseling, nursing the sick, child care, cooking, and public speaking. The majority expressed a high religious orientation. The incidence of depressive symptoms was low, although they were higher in the case of single women.

The families were alike in the way they went about solving problems. They most frequently talked out their problems. Most could rely on their extended families if they needed help from them.

The assistances they most often obtained from family members were emotional support, financial help, and child care.

All reported a high use of various coping strategies, and single mothers, in particular, reported a significantly higher use of a variety of coping strategies. Few families use resources outside of their families. Although they were extremely religious, ministers were seldom sought for problems. Professional help givers like psychologists and psychiatrists had seldom been contacted for assistance with problems.

Respondents were active, however, in school, church, and other groups.

From the families in this study, we know that it is possible to be a strong single parent and two-parent family in black communities. We also know, though, that it may take extraordinary effort and persistence, especially for single parents.

Support with the following problems needs to be addressed: One, to achieve economic stability. Second, to have affordable child care, and help with other child-related problems. Third, to obtain safe housing. Fourth, to obtain adequate employment.

We feel that addressing these concerns would help decrease the vulnerability to dysfunction in many black homes.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Lula Beatty follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LULA BEATTY, M.S., LAWRENCE E. GARY, PH.D., INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH, HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC

STRONG BLACK FAMILIES: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction.—Organizations and persons who develop programs for Black families have often been stymied by the lack of available information on the dynamics of strong Black family life. The need for information on strong Black family life is particularly acute at this time for the following four reasons. First, state and federally supported social programs have been drastically cut. These cuts have decreased the availability of resources for families and increased the number of families needing services. Black families have been severely and disproportionately harmed by these cuts. Secondly, local agencies and community groups are attempting to respond to the problems of their communities through the establishment of volunteer programs, community forums, and self-help programs. Their resources, however, are few and their experience is limited. They need information and direction. Thirdly, the importance of the family in the prevention and treatment of social and personal problems has been increasingly asserted by mental health researchers and practitioners. Expertise in family models of prevention and treatment of a multitude of social ills is urgently needed by those trying to develop responsive services and information programs. Fourthly, Black families are facing problems of staggering dimensions. Social problems such as teenage pregnancy and unemployment, alcoholism, depression, homicide, poverty, and school failure, for example, are disproportionately more likely to affect Black families than white ones. These problems enormously burden and endanger the well-being of Black children and families (for example, see the reports of the Children's Defense Fund reported by Williams, 1985 and the Urban Institute, 1984.) Page one stories citing statistic after statistic, incident after incident of the adversities faced and those inevitably to be faced by even greater numbers of Black families have appeared in the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, the Baltimore Evening Sun and the New York Times.

With support from the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ, a research study was conducted to discover the attributes and coping styles of strong, Black families. Specific objectives of the study were as follows: (1) to determine the critical factors and conditions that contribute to strong Black family life; (2) to identify strategies employed by families in resolving the problems of living; (3) to add to the knowledge base on strong families that would enhance practice intervention with families that are in need of help; and (4) to identify models of self-help strategies used by strong families.

Reported here are summary findings from the study that address the characteristics, problems, and coping strategies of a group of strong Black families.

Definition of Strong Black Families.—One of the most difficult aspects of our research was to define strong families. Various theorists and researchers have suggested that the following attributes are crucial in any definition of family strength and stability: a strong economic base, a high degree of religious orientation, achievement orientation, adaptability of family roles, strong kinship bonds, and family structure. After examining past work and theories, we concluded that family strength is not contingent on family structure. That is, strong families can exist in many forms. Therefore, we would expect to find strong families among single mother, single father, and two parent homes, for example, just as we would expect to find dysfunctional or weak families in two-parent households. Moreover, we also assumed that strong families would not be families without problems. Rather, strong families would be those that successfully coped with or averted problems.

For our study, we decided to include strong families from the two types of families most common in Black communities——two parent and single mother headed households.

Fifty (50) families from the Washington, D.C. area (26 husband-wife and 24 headed by females), nominated by community groups because of the perceived strengths and stability of the families, comprised the sample. Seventy-six (76) individual interviews were conducted to obtain information on the families' socio-demographic characteristics, neighboring and organizational participation, daily routines, talents, and skills, problems experienced, and coping strategies. Measures of religiosity, depressive symptoms, and family environment were also taken.

Characteristics of Strong, Black Families.—The identification of family strengths was obtained from three sources—the community informants, the interviewers, and the families themselves.

Community informants were asked to state the reasons they nominated the families referred for study participation. The most common reasons given were that the families displayed strong kinship bonds, achievement orientation, parenting skills or parent-child relations, religious/philosphical orientation, intellectual-cultural orientation, and the ability to deal with crises. It is interesting to note that female-headed families were twice as likely as were husband-wife families to be cited because of their ability to deal with crises.

Interviewers, when asked to share their impression of the persons they interviewed, most frequently mentioned the similarities among all families in traits such as having clearly defined roles, religious orientation, and genuinely caring for each other. Also noted were the families' great enthusiasm for life, high self-esteem, pride in their own accomplishments and those of Black people generally, and the ability to manage and maintain orderliness in their lives over extended periods of time.

Respondents were asked to list the strengths of their families. The most frequently cited strength of their own families was a sense of family unity. Married women's next most frequent responses were love, religion, sharing responsibilities, support, and coping strategies. Married men indicated that love was the next more prevalent strength in their families, followed by religion, support, and sharing responsibilities. Single women's next most frequently cited strengths were love, sharing responsibilities, religion and support, and coping strategies. There appeared to be few differences between the married men and women and the single women in their perceptions of their families strengths; however, a single women named slightly more strengths than did married women or men and single women were more likely to list sharing responsibilities as a strength.

Socio-demographic Profile.—Over half of the couples (n = 14, 53.6%) had been married for 20 years or more. Four couples had been married for 10 years or less, and 4 had been married for 30 years or more. Forty-two (42) percent (n = 11) of the women were married before the age of 21, compared to 23 percent (n = 6) of the men. Only 2 women and 6 men reported that they married at the age of 30 or older. The respondents' current modal age groups were 35 to 39 years and 50 to 54 years for the wives (n = 7, 26.80% for each) and 35 to 39 years (n = 6, 23.0%) for the husbands.

Most of the respondents are in stable first marriage. Only 3 women (11.5%) and 4 men (15.2%) reported they have been married before. Most couples had 2 children, but nearly 40 percent had more than 2 children.

With regard to education, 2 (7.7%) of the wives and 1 (3.8%) of the husbands did not complete high school; 8 each of the wives and husbands (30.8%) completed high school; 10 (38.5%) wives and 8 (30.8%) husbands completed college; and 6 (23.1%) wives and 9 (34.6%) husbands completed graduate programs. There was little difference between wives and husbands in the amount of formal education received.

The majority of husbands (96.2%) and wives (84.6%) worked outside the home. Only 1 man and 4 women were not employed. Over 70 percent of the men were employed in either professional/technical jobs (50.0%) or clerical positions (23.1%). Another 11.5 percent of the men were managers or administrators. There were 3 male craftsmen. The wives' occupations varied more than did those of the husbands. They were spread over 10 occupational fields in comparison to 4 for the husbands. More wives were employed in professional-technical (n=9, 34.6%) and clerical (n=6, 23.1%) positions than in any other field.

The majority of wives and husbands (n=15, 57.7% and n=18, 69.2%, respectively) reported total household incomes of $30,000 or more. Fewer than 25 percent by wives' account and 15 percent by husbands' account reported household incomes of less than $17,000. In addition, married men and married women had sources of additional income. Most often, extra income came from interest earned (19.2% for wives and 61.5% for men) or a second job (23.1% for wives and 30.8% for men).

Most couples had lived at their present address for more than five years (over 80%) and owned their own homes (over 90%). The majority of the couples maintain nuclear households (70%).

The single women were, for the most part, divorced (n=13, 54.2%) women. Only 4 had never been married. Two (2) were separated and 5 were widowed. Most were 35 to 39 years of age (n=10, 41.7%). Over 60 percent were under 40 years old. Eight of the women had one child and one had 13. Twenty-nine percent had finished college, and one-fourth had finished graduate school, while 41.7 percent had completed high school. Only 1 single woman head of household had completed only elementary school. Over 90 percent (n=22) were employed—most in professional-technical (n=11, 45.8%) or clerical (n=9, 37.5%) positions. Unlike the married women, they did not tend to be as spread out in occupational fields.

About 45 percent of the single women made under $17,000 per year and over 20 percent made over $25,000 per year. Their income was supplemented by second jobs (n=8, 33.3%) and other sources of revenue. Eight (8) (33.4%) of the women lived at their present address for under 5 years. Over half (n=13, 54.2) rented their homes. Most (n=16, 66.7%) lived in nuclear family households.

Problems Experienced.—One of the most revealing aspects of the study was the extent to which these strong families had experienced problems and expressed dissatisfaction with some areas of their lives.

Problems with finances, marriages, and children were the most frequently cited problems by all respondents, although the extent to which these problems were experienced varied among the three groups. Single women generally reported higher rates of problems than did married men and women (except that married men reported more health problems). Married couples did not vary much from each other in the extent to which they reported problems (except again in the case of health). All respondents expressed more dissatisfaction with their jobs than other aspects of their lives. Single women, in comparison to the married couples, were more dissatisfied in all areas of their lives particularly in regards to their jobs and neighborhoods.

Internal Resources and Coping.—All families were internally resourceful. They reported a high number of talents and skills within their household. Interestingly, all reported skills in tutoring, counseling, nursing the sick, child care, cooking, and public speaking. The majority expressed a high religious orientation. The incidence of depressive symptoms was low although they were higher in the case of single women.

The families were alike in the way they went about solving problems. They most frequently used discussion. Most could rely on their extended families if they needed help from them. Assistances most often obtained from family members were emotional support, financial help and child care. All reported a high use of multiple coping strategies. Single mothers, however, reported a significantly higher use of the following coping strategies: reframing, acquiring support, seeking spiritual help, and mobilizing resources.

External Resources.—Few families used resources outside of their families. Although they were extremely religious, ministers were seldom sought for problems.

Professional help-givers, e.g., psychologists, had seldom been contacted for assistance with problems.

Respondents were active, however, in school, church, and other groups.

Conclusion and Issues.—A strong family, as indicated then by the study, is one that has encountered problems and successfully resolved them with internal resources. This represents the ideal family system.

We are concerned about the number of Black families who can reach this ideal. From the families in this study, we know that the following problem areas need to be addressed: (1) economic stability, (2) child care and other child related problems, (3) housing, and (4) employment. These concerns determine in large part, the vulnerability of families, particularly Black families, to family dysfunction and dissolution.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Rekers.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE A. REKERS, PROFESSOR OF NEUROPSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, COLUMBIA, SC

Mr. REKERS. Thank you for the opportunity to address this hearing.

The demographic data that has been mentioned this morning point to a major source of new diversity existing in American families today as compared to previous generations, and that is namely, the rapid and substantial increase in the total percentage of children living in father-absent homes, as Dr. Hareven alluded to.

My own day-to-day work as a medical school professor and clinical psychologist in a university teaching hospital at the University of South Carolina, constantly reminds me that there are some forms of diversity among people which are healthy and desirable, but that there are other forms of diversity which reflect genuine human problems and create hardships. So to merely study the trends and demographics of family change does not in itself provide the full context necessary to understand normative family functioning or desired family functioning.

For many years, with major research grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, I have intensively studied identity disorders in children, beginning back in 1972 and 1973 when I was a visiting scholar at Harvard University. My research, as well as other research cited in my written testimony, points out that children without fathers more often have lowered academic performance, more cognitive and intellectual deficits, increased adjustment problems, and higher risk for certain developmental problems.

In my studies, I have found that the father's absence was related to important risks for a child's adjustments to a normal identification. Interestingly, the extent of the father's absence in childhood—in terms of the amount of time a father was absent—was directly proportional to the severity of the child's psychological problems.

How is the fatherless child more vulnerable? We must remember that an independently sustaining family unit with children has at least three major functions for the parents—there is (1) income production, (2) household maintenance, and (3) child-rearing. In the normal intact family, these three functions are shared in various kinds of division of labor between the mother and father. But when there is only parent in the home instead of two, then one or more of these three vital functions will almost invariably suffer loss unless there is extensive outside social and/or economic support provided.

According to Cynthia Longfellow's research, there are two crucial effects of father absence that need to be assessed in over 90 percent of homes whēre the father leaves: first, the lack of parental supervision and discipline, and; second, a lack of a role model for the sons.

On the positive side, there is a wealth of developmental research over recent decades that has clearly established the characteristics of fathers that promote normal child adjustment. Dr. Armand Nicholi, a psychiatrist on the Harvard Medical School faculty, expressed the widely held conclusion from human development research, when he recently wrote this:

> If we know anything about normal human development, it rests heavily on a close, warm, sustained relationship with both parents. If people with severe emotional non-organic disorders have anything in common, it is that they have experienced, sometime in their childhood, an absence of an accessible parent because of death, divorce, or a time-demanding job.

There is a wealth of child development research I have referenced in my written testimony that indicates that secure identify and normal psychological adjustment is fostered in children by fathers in the home who are affectionate, nurturent, available, and actively involved in child-rearing.

This research shows that there is a complex interaction between the father's dominance, his nurturance and his limit-setting, which in combination, promote normal child development and adjustment.

These relationship values found in the child development research, bears a striking resemblance to the research by Stinnett and Beatty—whom we have heard this morning—but also the research of others, including Otto, Whitaker, Hill, Lewis, and Beavers.

Normal child adjustment usually requires that these fathering characteristics be either present in the family or be provided by active substitution. In referring to an analogy between family wellness and physical wellness of the human body, we do know that it is possible for a person, who has lost a leg to move about with the help of crutches, thereby compensating for that difficulty. In that sense, the arms, thereby, compensate for the missing leg.

In the same way, some families are able to compensate in varying degrees for the absence of a father so that the necessary features of this father role are taken by other individuals such as a grandfather, an older brother, by community volunteers such as Big Brothers or others, or by other males in a kinship relationship that has been mentioned this morning.

Research clearly shows that the vast majority of American citizens really desire continuity and enduring commitment in their family relationships, including the father/child relationship, when survey researchers ask them about their own family.

Therefore, it is both compassionate and in society's vital interest to discover how to build and restore strength into American families.

The research I summarized in my written statement shows that the absence of the father is increasingly posing one of the most common and tragic weaknesses in American families, placing an increasing number of children at substantial greater risk for their development and their well-being, as compared to children living in a continuity experience with two parents.

A tremendous amount of child suffering and family handicaps could be prevented by a national agenda to restore social expectations and public policies that support continuity of fathering in families.

Identifying family strengths and focusing on how they can be transferred to families at risk for divorce, for example, would be a most significant undertaking with far-reaching benefits to children and society, because divorce is a major cause of father absence in families. And as we have heard this morning, it is a major source of distress for American children.

I agree with Dr. Stinnett, who has suggested that prevention may be more humane and more economical than remediation alone. My recent book, "Family Building," includes contributed chapters which provide some preventive approaches to enhance and restore strength to American families. I commend for your consideration these creative program ideas on promoting marital stability and parental competence, because American children develop fewer debilitating problems when provided a stable, nurturing relationship with both parents.

In conclusion, I would suggest that fresh, new, national leadership is needed exactly at this point. For too long American society has attended to the legitimate individual needs of children in fatherless homes and to the plight of the single mother to the neglect of the family system before its breakdown. The result has been only a partial symptomatic relief in many cases, which has neglected the root problems in the original family system itself. So we have many isolated categorical programs funded by the Government for pregnant teenagers, for runaway youth, for school dropouts, juvenile delinquents, and for various child-adjustment difficulties. And these programs often have typically not met the total family need which generated the individual problem in the first place.

I am not suggesting that we abandon those programs, because they are very important in a compassionate society, but many serious marital and child-development problems could be prevented if corrected in the early stages, if families were better equipped to recognize family strengths and to build on these strengths. Many needy marriages would benefit from learning about the successful coping practices used by families with high levels of well-being, that both Lula Beatty and Nick Stinnett have described this morning.

So there is a glaring need for more prevention and family life education.

Also, I concur with Dr. Stinnett that the Federal role needs to be reconceptualized to analyze family impact variables, to determine the impact of national policies, regulations, taxation, and legislation upon families; and to publicize how successful American family life really works.

Marriage enrichment and parent education curricula that promote the values and skills possessed by strong American families should be identified, developed, evaluated, and then disseminated to the local community networks in our community that work with families.

Research has also established the high correlation between a religious commitment and family commitment. So this finding underscores the strategic importance of encouraging the work of religious institutions with family education and their involvement in forming the kind of natural helping networks of families that needy families turn to.

Therefore, by promoting and disseminating, these findings on strong families, the Federal role could more effectively facilitate private and local community efforts to prevent family dysfunction and thereby promote more stable and adaptive child development.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of George Rekers follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEORGE A. REKERS, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF NEUROPSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, WILLIAM S. HALL PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA, SC, ON THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FATHER'S ROLE FOR CHILD ADJUSTMENT AND FAMILY STRENGTH[1]

The need to restore fathering for family well-being.—I want to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families for inviting me to address this hearing. In my recent book "Family Building," J. Allan Petersen contributed a chapter in which he asserted, "The family as an institution is here to stay. We are not deciding its existence. We may decide the quality of its life, its performance, its legal status but not its reality as a abiding institution. The human race will be perpetuated through the family. Identifying family strengths and focusing on their improvement on a large scale is therefore a most significant undertaking with far-reaching consequences. Our zeroing in on the positive qualities of family strength has great potential and can provide clear guidance as to where to give attention and initiate action" (Petersen, 1985). Eighty-eight percent of all Americans live in families and fifty percent of all families have children under the age of 18 years (Chapman, 1985). For these reasons I commend your committee for addressing the strategic issues involved on the topic "The Diversity and Strength of American Families."

This is an important undertaking, to study the trends and changes in family life in American today. This committee has received testimony that has established the fact that single-parent families are forming at twenty times the rate of two-parent families. A record number of 1.2 million divorces in 1981 affected 1.8 million children. The divorce rate has more than doubled since 1970. But in addition, recent years have witnessed a notable increase in one-parent families in cases in which children live with a mother who have never been married. Since 1970, there has been a four-fold increase, to 2.8 million, in the number of children being raised by mothers who have never been married. These statistics, then, point to a major source of the new diversity existing in American families today as compared to previous generations—namely, the rapid increase in the total percentage of children living in father-absent homes.

I would therefore like to review my own research and other child development and family social science research on the father's role in family well being. I address this task not only as a research psychologist who has received over half a million dollars in federal research grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and other agencies, but also as a practicing clinical psychologist and professor at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine. My day-to-day work in the University's teaching hospitals constantly reminds me that there are some forms of diversity among people which are desirable but other forms of diversity which reflect genuine abnormality and create hardship and suffering. I often recall a telephone call that I received from the elementary school principal of one of my child patients. The principal told me, "Chad's teacher sent him to my office because he was crying uncontrollably in the classroom. After I had calmed him down and asked him, what is the matter, he told me, 'I don't know who my real daddy is.' "

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[1] Presented at the Congressional Hearing, "The Diversity and Strength of American Families," before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, Feb. 25, 1986, room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

The diversity, strengths and weaknesses of American families.—To merely study the trends and demographics of family change does not, in itself, provide the full context necessary to understand normative family functioning or desired family functioning. For example, if a fifty-one percent majority of all fathers sexually abuse their daughters, this majority phenomena would not automatically be considered by our society to be desirable. It is imperative, therefore, that your committee differentiate diversity which arises out of family strengths from family diversity which arises out of weaknesses, problems and human failure. I will review a substantial body of empirical research that demonstrates that some types of families are inherently better environments for children's well-being.

Some family diversity is within the normal, functioning range.—To draw the analogy to physical health, we all know healthy people with a diversity of physical characteristics: there are short people, tall people, black people, white people, blue-eyed people, brown-eyed people and so forth. These are all fine variations which can exist in a healthy person. And so it is, there is a range of types of families within the normal functioning range which includes some families, for example, with a dozen biological children, others with two adopted children, and still other married couples with no children. Some families live near or with extended family relatives and some families live as a nuclear family by itself. Some types of normal family diversity are built upon particular sets of strengths that a family may possess (Rekers, 1985a).

Other forms of family diversity result from problems and are associated with human suffering.—Extending our analogy to health, some people must unfortunately live out their life with one part of their body chronically impaired or missing—an arm or a leg or an eye, etc. Such an individual has a physical handicap and perhaps through crutches for the person without a leg or by learning to use hearing more effectively for the blind person, the body can compensate for the loss of one of its normal members.

And so it is with the family. Some forms of diversity are not necessarily desirable, for example, families with a physically abusive father, families who have lost a member through illness and death, families in which a father regularly gambles away his paycheck rather than providing support to the family, families in which children are neglected, or families in which drug abuse is chronic.

In a recent review of the cross-cultural research literature on parental accessibility by a Harvard professor, this conclusion was made: "Parents in this country (U.S.) spend less time with their children than in any other nation in the world, perhaps with the exception of England—the one country that surpasses the U.S. in violent crime and juvenile delinquency. Cross-cultural studies show that even in countries where children are brought up in collectives, parents tend to spend more time with their children than they do in this country. Research shows that, in Russia, fathers spend as much as two or three hours a day with their children. But, in this country, according to a study out of Boston, fathers spend on the average of 37 seconds a day with their young children" (Nicholi, 1985a).

Wide-spread parental inaccessibility and father absence in the United States is related to trends over the past 30 years in child-rearing practices, divorce, and out-of-wedlock birth rates. According to data from the National Center Health Statistics, between 1960 and 1980, out-of-wedlock birth rates rose from two to ten percent among whites and from twenty-two to fifty-five percent among blacks.

In 1960, one in eleven children in the United States lived in a single-parent home and by 1980, one in five children were living in a single-parent home. Dr. Paul Glick (1981) of the United States Bureau of the Census estimates that by 1990, one in four children will be living in a single-parent home, and that one in two—fully fifty percent of all children under age 18 in 1990—will have lived for some portion of their lives in a one-parent family. Ninety percent of these children live with their mother, with their father absent from the home. In 1980, there were over 11 million children living in families with a father-figure in the home.

These facts should be of great national concern, because both developmental and clinical studies have well-established the general rule that the father's positive presence in the home is, in the vast majority of cases, normally essential for existence of family strength and child adjustment.

Characteristics of the father's role are essential for family strength.—Major child adjustment problems are associated with father absence or failures in fathering. With this huge exodus of so many fathers from the homes of American children over the past two decades, we should surely ask: "What is the effect of the father's absence on children's development?" Research has documented that children without fathers more often have lowered academic performance, more cognitive and intellectual deficits, increased adjustment problems, and higher risks for psychosexual development problems (Bach, 1946; Biller, 1976; Biller & Baum, 1971; Carlsmith, 1964; Drake & McDugall, 1977; Hetherington & Deur, 1971; Lynn, 1974, 1976; Matthews, 1976; McCord, McCord & Thurber, 1962; Mead & Rekers, 1979; Nash, 1965; Nicholi, 1985b; Reis & Gold, 1977; Rekers, 1981, 1986; Stolz, 1954). With major research grants from the National Institute of Mental Health for many years, I have studied psychosexual and gender disturbances in children beginning in 1972-1973 when I served as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University. I have found concluded that the father's absence is related to important risks for the boy's adjustments to a normal male identification (Rekers, 1978, 1985b, 1986; Rekers, Bentler, Rosen and Lovaass, 1977; Rekers and Jurich, 1983; Rekers and Mead, 1980; Rekers, Mead, Rosen and Brigham, 1983; Rekers, Rosen, Lovaass and Bentler, 1978).

Family studies research has isolated three major functions for an independently sustaining family unit with children—these are (1) income production, (2) household maintenance, and (3) child rearing. In the normal, intact family, these three functions are shared in a division of labor between the mother and the father.

When there is only one parent in the home instead of two, then one or more of these three vital functions usually suffers serious loss unless there is massive outside social and/or economic support provided. Consequently, it is all too common that the children suffer economic, social and/or emotional deprivation. It is not surprising, in this context, that poor academic performance, susceptibility to peer groups, involvement in delinquent behavior, suicide, and homicide are all found to be higher among children from homes in which one or both parents are missing or frequently absent (Hoffman, 1961; Nicholi, 1985a, 1985b).

Research has established that one of the more important functions that the father normally fulfills in the family is to ensure the development of appropriate sexual identity in his children (Biller, 1976; Drake & McDugall, 1977; Greenstein, 1966; Hetherington, 1966; Lynn, 1976). The absence of the father for boys has been linked to greater occurrences of effeminancy, higher dependence, less successful adult heterosexual adjustment, greater aggressiveness or exaggerated masculine behaviors (Apperson & McAdoo, 1968; Bene, 1965; Berg & Kelly, 1979; Bieber, 1962; Earls, 1976; Evans, 1969; Greenstein, 1966; Mussen & Distler, 1960; Santrock, 1977; Stoller, 1969; West, 1959; Winch, 1949). All these detrimental effects reflect various reactions to an inadequate development of masculine role and male identification.

In girls, research studies by Heatherington and her colleagues have compared girls with two parents with girls who grew up without a father because of divorce or death of the father. Compared with girls with intact nuclear families, girls who lost their father by death were more inhibited in their relationships with males in general, but girls who lost their fathers by divorce were overly responsive to males, were more likely to be sexually involved with males in adolescence, married younger, were pregnant more often before marriage, and became divorced or separated from their eventual husbands more frequently (Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1976, 1978, 1979).

According to Cynthia Longfellow (1979) there are two crucial effects of father absence that need to be assessed in over 90% of the cases in which the father leaves: (1) the lack of parental supervision and discipline; (2) the lack of a sex-role model for the sons. A number of research studies have found that single parents (usually mothers) are at risk to develop poor quality relationships with their children which can then lead to increased psychopathology among the children (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1975; Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1976). Both unsatisfactory parent-child and parent-parent relationships are individual risk factors for psychiatric effects upon the children (see review by Larson, 1985).

Are the effects of divorce positive or negative for children?—In a review of effects of divorce on children, Wallerstein and Kelly (1979), the investigators of the "Children of Divorce Project" of the Marin Community Mental Health Center in California concluded:

"Initially, almost all children and many adolescents experience divorce as painful and as disruptive of their lives, and their suffering is compounded by both unrealistic and realistic fears. These fears are related to the following factors: a heightened sense of vulnerability, sadness at the loss of the protected structure of the family and of the parent who does not retain custody, guilt over fantasized or actual misdeeds that may have contributed to parents' quarrels (although such fantasies are not found in all children), worry over distressed parents, anger at the parent or parents who have disrupted the child's world, shame regarding parent's behavior, a sense of being along, and concern about being different from peers. For many children and adolescents, the overall initial response to divorce can properly be considered a reactive depression. There is no evidence that these initial reactions are muted or are experienced as less painful because of the high incidence of divorce taking place in the surrounding community."

Nevertheless, there have been statements in the professional literature, surprisingly, to the contrary. For instance, Michael Lamb (1977) concluded: "There is little support for the (assumption) that divorce is necessarily harmful. (p. 163)." Although he concluded that children of divorced parents are "at risk" for psychological damage, he also offered the opinion: "Divorce can be beneficial to children, inasmuch as it signals the termination of hostilities, uncertainties, and harmful hatefulness" (p. 171). Similarly, Phyllis McGrab (1978) acknowledged the sense of loss, the sense of failure, and the difficult transitions often associated with divorce for the child. But she also speculated, "When we consider the effect of divorce or separation on children, we must equally consider the effects of living in a home where there may be ongoing tension, conflict and stress. 'For the sake of the child' regardless of the short and long-term consequences, divorce or separation at times is the most viable solution to optimizing the potential of that child for sound emotional and personal growth." (p. 233).

Too often, in the professional literature, a supposed beneficial effect of divorce is presumed by making just this type of comparison: Compared to the conflict in a poor marriage, wouldn't the child be better off, after all, if the parents divorced? What is often omitted from the discussion is any potential for a third alternative for both the parents and child: Namely, could the problems of the marriage be solved or resolved with some kind of help thereby eliminating the conflict and stress for the child. We must keep this third alternative in mind and not fatalistically assume that the divorce rate will continue at the present or higher rates, and that therefore somehow we must conclude that divorce is the best way out for many children. Too often, there is the assumption that nothing could be done to help solve the problem causing the conflict in the marriage.

A shift in social attitudes toward divorce.—Prior to the second half of the 20th century in America, divorce was not prevalent, and a popular attitude of even unhappily married couples was that they should stay together for the good of their children. In contrast, the latter half of the 20th century has witnessed a major shift in values to a popular lay and professional attitude expressing a strong sentiment that unhappy marriage for the couple is equally unhappy for the children, implying the needed so-called "solution" of divorce to restore happiness for the parents, which presumably will foster happiness for the children as well.

Although the myth of romantic love in marriage may be dying, the myth of romantic divorce flourishes for many Americans. While most might agree that perpetuating a conflict-filled marriage for the sake of the children only lacks complete logic, I am increasingly disappointed by so many in the media, as well as professionals and married couples alike who overlook the obvious third alternative to divorce or staying unhappily married. That is, it would be better to make major and prolonged efforts to solve the marital problems and restore harmony in the existing marriage, before considering the extreme alternative of divorce.

The third alternative—strengthening marriage and family relationships.—It is irresponsible to automatically assume the fatalistic view that nothing could be done to solve the problems causing conflict in the marriage. With the widespread acceptance of divorce as an instance so-called "solution" in our instant society where we are used to instant meals and the like, millions of divorce cases entering the courts in the last decade have never attempted concerted problem solving efforts with an outside resource, such as a marriage counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, clergy, social work, or family life educator.

Furthermore, the followup studies on divorced children of Drs. Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1975, 1979) reveal that the majority (56%) of children surveyed five years after their parents' divorce did not consider their after-divorce families to be an improvement over their before-divorce home. The children reported more happiness before divorce that did their parents. The children generally prefer living with both mom and dad, even in the presence of considerable conflict. From the child's perspective, divorce should be viewed as an extreme measure of last resort, something akin to the amputation of a limb if one's body is affected by gangrene and no medical treatment has succeeded, but only after trying all possible types of medical treatment.

While neither an unhappy marriage nor a divorce is the most desirable environment for children's development, too many professionals and lay people alike hastily assume the inevitability of continued unhappiness in the conflicted marriage to ethically justify the supposed solution of family divorce.

Actually, divorce is typically little more than trading one set of problems for a different set of tragic and often enduring problems, often including the problems associated with father absence. It seems that millions of parents have purchased their own relief from marital conflict with a divorce that forces their children to pay the price in unhappiness, stress, and adjustment problems that could persist for a lifetime.

Victimless divorce is either rare or nonexistent when children are present (Bane, 1979; Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978; Kelly & Berg, 1978; Reinhard, 1977). How much better it would be if the professions and the public alike refocused upon a search for a genuine solution to marital dissatisfaction in order to preserve the family unit in an unbroken state. Vast numbers of marriages could be strengthened and problem-solving methods are available to reduce marital conflict and distress.

Divorce has become one of the most common tragic crises in present day American society. The rapid growth of the number of broken homes has forced unprecedented numbers of children to suffer as innocent victims.

The primary cause of father absence in American families today is divorce. Research on the effects of divorce reveals that the initial impact of the separation or divorce causes pain, suffering, fears and disruption for almost all children and teenagers involved (Bane, 1979; Berg & Kelly, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1976, 1978, 1979; Kelly & Berg, 1978; Kurkek & Siesky, 1979; Luepwitz, 1979; McDermott, 1968; Raschke & Raschke, 1979; Reinhard, 1977, Rutter, 1971). As a practicing clinical psychologist and family therapist, I regularly witness what the research documents for these children of divorced homes: these youngsters typically suffer depression over their loss, worry and anxiety over the marital disintegration, anger toward a parent for the resultant chaos and disruption, guilt over their real or imagined misbehavior thought to have contributed to the family break-up, loneliness and apprehensiveness over being seen as different from playmates, and a keen feeling of vulnerability to uncontrollable tragedy. The child's acute psychological distress and sense of family instability persists two or more years, with potential life-time consequences (see various studies by Wallerstein). Each year over the past decade, more than one million under 18 years of age have experienced their parent's divorce, with estimates that between 32% to 46% of children who have grown up in the United States during the 1970's will have experienced separation or divorce of their parents. These wide spread effects are not only psychological but economic, with over half of all single-parent families living below the poverty level.

Research has clearly established the characteristics of fathers who promote normal child adjustment.—As the research strategies have become more sophisticated over time, the focus of studies on the father's impact on child development has shifted from comparisons of effects of fathers' absence versus fathers' presence to studies of the paternal characteristics which are associated with healthy adjustment.

Dr. Armand Nicholi, a psychiatrist on the faculty of Harvard University, has expressed the widely held conclusion among scholars of child development research, "If we know anything about normal human development, it rests heavily on a close, warm, sustained relationship with both parents. And if people with severe emotional non-organic disorders have anything in common, it's that they have experienced, sometime in their childhood, an absence of an accessible parent because of death, divorce or a time-demanding job. Some people say, 'Well, it's not the quantity of time, it's the quality.' They use that statement to rationalize their not spending enough time with their spouses and children, but time is like oxygen. There's a minimum amount that is needed to survive. Less than that amount may cause permanent damage. And I think the same holds true for a child's time and exposure to both parents" (Nicholi, 1985a).

A wealth of child development research indicates that a secure male identify and a normal psychological adjustment is fostered in boys by fathers in the home who are affectionate, nurturant, available, and actively involved in child rearing (Mead & Rekers, 1979). Girls secure in their femininity tend to have fathers who encourage their feminine adjustment and contribute leadership in child rearing. Boys are much more likely to identify with their fathers if their interactions are rewarding and affectionate (Mussen and Distler, 1960). The father usually fulfills an instrumental role in the family in contrast to the expressive role of the mother. Lynn (1974) has contended that instrumentality is associated with preparing children for their roles in society and in two parent families, the instrumental role is typically the role taken by the father.

The research suggests a complex interaction between the father's dominance, paternal nuturance and his limit-setting which in combination promote normal child development and adjustment (Biller, 1976; Lamb, 1976).

The family strengths research parallels this child development research of fathering.—A large number of quantitative and qualitative research studies on the characteristics of strong families have produced parallel results in recent decades. Some of these investigators are Otto, Whitaker, Hill, Lewis, Satir, Stinnet, Beavers, Gossett, Phillips, and Curran. An unpublished summary review of the research of these various investigators by Dr. Judson Swihart (at the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Kansas State University) found that the five characteristics of strong families found in common throughout all these investigators' research were the following: (1) good communication between family members, (2) appreciation expressed for one another in the family, (3) a spiritual/religious commitment, (4) adaptability and flexibility in the family, and (5) clarity of family rules.

Normal child adjustment requires that these fathering characteristics either be present in the family or provided by active substitution.—There are factors which can mitigate the negative influence of a fatherless home. The presence of a father substitute has generally been found to counteract, to a certain extent, the effects of paternal deprivation (Matthews, 1976; Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg and Landy, 1968). For example, Santrock (1970) found that fathers' absence in black pre-school boys was significantly related to femininity, dependency and lack of normal aggression, as compared to father-present controls. However, the boys whose fathers were absent and who had a father substitute were significantly less dependent than the father-absent boys who had no father substitute.

Another factor which has been found to lessen the effects of paternal deprivation is a positive attitude towards the father and toward men in general on the part of the mother (Biller and Baum, 1971; Matthews, 1976).

Referring again to my analogy between family wellness and the physical wellness in the human body, we know that it is possible for a person who has lost a leg to move about in society with the help of crutches. With extra effort, the arms thereby partially compensate for the missing leg. In the same way, there are ways in which families are able to compensate for the absence of a father. The research, suggests that an active and costly substitution is occurring so that features of the missing father role are taken by other individuals such as an uncle, grandfather, older brother, or family friend. Furthermore, government welfare dollars are often spent as a substitute for the loss of income caused by the father's absence.

While there certainly are families without fathers who come through with "flying colors," this is done by compensating with real efforts, much like the person with a missing leg who perservers.

The fatherless families that "make it" are those who have preserved in heroic fashion in the face of the family's limitation and associated adversity, much like the way Helen Keller achieved so much without eyesight or hearing. To say that many children raised in single-parent home can become well-adjusted, productive citizens is true because compensation is possible, but it does not tell the whole story. The same can be said of blind people—they can live well-adjusted, productive lives. But both the blind person and the fatherless child have missed something very desirable and crucial that could have enriched their lives and made their adjustment much less difficult and costly.

Research clearly shows that the vast majority of adult and child citizens in America desire continuity and enduring commitment in father-child relationships, rather than having to suffer the loss of a nurturing and supportive father. In the face of pessimistic headlines that the family is an endangered species, research sets forth two important findings: (1) desire for fulfilling family life is as strong today as it was 50 years ago, and (2) effective family life does not just happen, it is the result of deliberate intention and practice.

George Gallup (1983) has repeatedly found in his polls that Americans hope and aspire for an intact, nuclear family. On the part of children, Wallerstein has reported the findings of her extensive research on divorce that children desire that their biological parents be reunited as long as five years after the divorce had taken place.

The family and the national agenda.—It is, therefore, both compassionate and in society's vital interest to discover how to build and restore strength into America's families. Frankly, the absence of the father is increasingly posing one of the most common and tragic weaknesses of American families, placing increasing numbers of children at substantially greater risk in their development and well-being than other children living with continuity with both parents in a strong family.

Public policy and prevention.—Our shared cultural values mandate compassionate help for hurting and needy families. But at the same time, an "ounce of prevention" is worth more than a pound of cure in serving families. A tremendous amount of child suffering and family distress could be prevented by a national agenda to restore social expectation and public policy that support the continuity of fathering in families.

As the 1980s dawned, there was beginning to be a rising appreciation for the fact that prevention is both more humane and more economical than remediation alone. Central in any thought of prevention is the place of the family. The family shapes the attitudes and practices of children and provides the basis of support and identity for adults.

Fresh, new national leadership is needed at exactly this point. For too long, American society has attended to the individual needs of the children of fatherless homes and the plight of the single parent to the neglect of the family system before its breakdown. The result has often been only a partial symptomatic relief, or a "band-aid" approach which neglected the root problems in the original family unit itself. Isolated categorical government programs—such as those for unwed, pregnant teenagers, runaway youth, school drop outs, juvenile delinquents, or childhood adjustment problems- as important as they are, simply have not typically met the total family need which generated the individual problem in the first place.

Restoring the primary parental role.—Coinciding with the 20th century phenomenon of governmentally-funded, professional services for child problems, there has been a parallel tendency for families to delegate more and more of its functions to outside institutions. For example, the health needs of a family might be inappropriately delegated entirely to the health care system and physicians, thereby neglecting the proper parental roles in preventative measures for health maintenance. While professional services can be effectively used by parents who maintain their own primary involvement and responsibility for their children's welfare, the attempts by many parents to massively delegate or abdicate parental responsibility to government, professional and community programs has not proven to be an effective substitute for family well-being and parental accessibility.

The parental role is central in encouraging youth and in providing for their needs for the largest portion of mainstream American families. For example, the parenting practices of many families promote a work orientation and successful job acquisition and employment retention by youth, and other families could benefit from the identification of those practices and the wide spread application of those practices. The needs of child and youth development and the goal of prevention of serious dysfunctions will be best served by reinforcing the value and centrality of the stable family unit and parental role. Marriage relationships and parenting roles can be strengthened to give children and youth more confidence, self-respect and competence to succeed in today's world.

Applying research knowledge on family strengths.—Many serious marital and child development problems could be prevented or corrected in early stages if families were better equipped to recognize family strengths and to build upon those strengths. Many needy marriages would benefit from learning about the successful and coping practices used by families with high levels of well being. There is a glaring need for more prevention strengthening of family life to offset the need for expanded governmental financial support for remedial social services for child victims of fatherless families.

Marriage enrichment and parent education curricula that promote the values and skills possessed by strong American families should be identified, developed, evaluated and disseminated to existing social support networks in local communities.

Research indicates that family connections with local support networks decreases need for use of a variety of governmental social services. Research has also established a high correlation between religious commitment and family commitment; this finding underscores the strategic importance of encouraging the work of religious institutions with family education and their involvement with natural helping networks for families (Rekers, 1985a). Volunteer resources can be activated by providing effective preventative educational materials for local programming to enhance marital satisfaction and parental competence, nurturance, and human problem-solving skills. Dissemination and widespread utilization of demonstration project findings on building family strengths could effectively facilitate private and local agency efforts to prevent family dysfunction and thereby promote more stable and adaptive child development.

National leadership on behalf of America's families.—The federal role needs to be reconceptualized to analyze family impact variables, to determine the impact of national policies, regulations, taxation and legislation upon families and to publicize how successful marriage and family life works. It is doubtful that the federal government can directly influence families to be strong in American society; the causation more likely runs in the opposite direction—i.e., strong families contribute to the strength of a nation. However, the leadership in federal government should be held accountable if they create a "desert" environment for families when they should be creating a"greenhouse" in which families can flourish.

Prevention is always more humane and more economical than remediation. My recent book, "Family Building" (Rekers, 1985a), includes contributed chapters by researchers, clinicians, community and national leaders which provide innovative, preventation approaches to enhancing and restoring strengths to the nation's families. I commend for your consideration these creative program ideas on promoting marital stability and parental competence, because American children develop fewer debilitating problems when provided stable and nurturing relationships with their fathers. The recognition of the qualities demonstrated to be essential for family strength can guide the national agenda to attenuate the social and economic forces that contribute to the undesirable types of family diversity.

Identifying family strengths and focusing on how they can be transferred to families at risk for divorce would be a most significant undertaking with a far reaching potential benefits to children and to society, because divorce is a major cause of father absence in families and a major source of distress for American children. As Petersen (1985) astutely observed, "Our zeroing in on the positive qualities of family strength has great potential and can provide clear guidance as to where to give attention and to initiate action." I recommend that this strategy be attempted on a national level to strengthen America's families.

Promotion of education to equip families to recognize and cultivate their strengths can create a new vision in our communities—a perspective that says that preparation for family life is part of our nation's plan of primary prevention. It is a basic part of education for citizenship and health.

It is my hope that America's leaders will sow some seeds of prevention that might strengthen family life in our generation that will reap a fruitful harvest of family stability, marital success and a nuturing environment for the future children of our nation and the world.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much.

If we accept, Dr. Rekers, what you have just said in terms of the relationship between the absent father and the healthy development of the children, I guess one of the interesting questions would be is how do we transfer successful models from one to another?

You touched at the end on reconceptualizing the Federal role, and then you immediately jumped to describe some other institutions that seemed to have some success. I would think there would be prevailing thought in the Congress that the Congress ought not to get involved with those other institutions, be they religious organizations, or what have you.

We sort of have a schizophrenic approach to what the Government should or should not do in providing services, especially when we go into the areas what we like to label as prevention. Even though they have some success in the delivery of human services; it is in an area we don't seem totally comfortable intruding in.

I just wondered how you suggest we get there from here. As was noted in some of the previous testimony, some of the changes that we now see with respect to the change in the workplace, the change in the divorce rate seem to be, from the statistical evidence, permanent. It may fluctuate in terms of raw numbers over the next decade, but it looks pretty much like that will continue.

That is an awful lot of families that are going to break up, and if your premise is correct with some distancing of the father, it is a serious situation.

Mr. Rekers. There are several responses I could make. There is one section in my recent book, "Family Building," where I have a chapter by Dolores Curran that Congressman Frank Wolf spoke of in his opening remarks. Dr. Curran she has many ideas in her chapter on the ways in which various agencies within the community, including Government, PTA's, and schools could be more cooperative in trying to attend to the needs of families.

One thought I have on the Federal role is that the Federal Government often has access to information, like this research on strong families, which has great, educational potential that many private community agencies working with families do not know about. Many leaders of PTA's, YMCA's, or other community groups that are already naturally working with families could benefit by workshop training opportunities. The leaders of these groups could learn about family strengths and how to conduct effective marriage enrichment or parent education workshops. This could be a way in which the Government indirectly supports the formation of strong families. Government already serves as a broker of research information and could provide opportunities to train these volunteers in the local community that families are turning to.

We heard two families speak this morning. One family said they didn't turn to professional help when in a stressful divorce. Many of the other people in our Nation also do not turn to professional help either because of financial reasons, or because of values, or cultural gaps between the professional person and the family. But they do often turn to leaders in volunteer groups: churches, Y's, and this sort of thing. The Government could provide helpful information resources materials to those groups.

I have tried this out on a pilot basis in two of the communities in which I have lived by just offering workshop training for people who work with families in the community. They were amazed that there is such a thing as research on strong families, and it helped them immensely to learn about it.

I am also a consultant to a major interdenominational agency that has representatives of many different church groups in it. A special Task Force on the Family was discussing: What can we in the church do to help prevent divorce? They went into all the aspects of divorce, and concluded, "We need to know more about research on how and why divorce happens." I suggested to them, perhaps it would be more helpful to find out what the research says about healthy, functioning families, and then transfer some of those characteristics to the needy families. This was something they had never heard of—that there is such a thing as research on strong families and how they function.

I would refer you to some of the other chapters in "Family Building" that suggest other roles that the Government could take in transferring family strengths of strong families to needy families who have deficits.

Mr. STINNETT. I think much could be done in developing linkages between different groups, such as schools, social agencies, churches, and so forth. This is something that the Extension Service has done very well, as well as a lot of their fine educational programs. But much more could be done just in terms of getting groups that are concerned with families together and developing those linkages.

Chairman MILLER. Dr. Hareven.

Ms. HAREVEN. I think one of the preventive areas today the Federal Government can get into without any anxiety of interference is in economically strengthening of families.

As we heard this morning from the Davis family, one reason the Davis family was doing well is because of their economic stability. Adequate child care facilities, and other kinds of adequate supports for working mothers, not only in broken families but in intact families, could be very important preventive measures in cases where divorce is caused or precipitated by economic pressures.

Chairman MILLER. Dr. Cherlin.

Mr. CHERLIN. Building on Professor Hareven's point, let me say that my reading of the literature on the effects of divorce on children is that the major problem that children have in a single parent family is not the lack of a male image but, rather, the lack of a male income. I do think that economic supports for those families are very valuable supports.

I applaud in general the attempts to develop some kind of preventive strategies. I applaud and admire the efforts of the people who have testified here today. I must admit that I am not terribly sanguine about how easy it is to do that. Over the past 30 or 40 years, several of the best family sociologists in the United States devoted many of the best years of their lives to try and to develop scales that they could give to husbands and wives, or prospective husbands and wives, to determine whether they would be compatible. The idea was that if we could help married people be more compatible we would have a lower divorce rate.

My reading of that huge literature that took decades to develop is that it was a failure. I think it is very difficult to teach people how to have commitment, how to deal with crises, and so forth. But I think especially those of us who are concerned about the Government role ought to think about what it is that government's can do efficiently and effectively, and what are the likely successes of this enterprise.

Chairman MILLER. The reason for my question is this: That historically we have seen models created by various institutions, whether it is local governments, or whether it is nonprofits, or charitable organizations, religious organizations, we have seen models that in fact have had a very positive impact on a particular problem related to families. My most extensive involvement has been with foster care and adoption services. When we started some years ago, 80 percent of the families that had their children removed from home had not had any preplacement services offered to them to see whether or not you could hold the family together. And 80 percent of the families that had the child removed from the home had no reunification services of any kind offered to them to see whether you could put this family back together. And, of course, the result was that a child who was removed usually spent the rest of their childhood somewhere in foster care roaming around from family to family.

That is just one portion of the problem. But those statistics start to develop a pattern wherever we go in terms of various problems that confront families.

It is interesting to talk about all these models but the road to healthy families is littered with model programs, and prototypes, and startup grants, and everything else, that started to flourish, and then died for budgetary reasons, most times regardless of the administration.

So I am a little concerned about representing that this can all be handled if we just join hands, when I look at the numbers of children, the numbers of various categorical families, however, you want to break them down—the numbers are rather overwhelming for whatever system currently exist today. And if you were to double that system, I suggest the numbers still seem to be overwhelming in terms of access.

But one of the things that we keep hearing in the panels that come before this committee is that the successful family models that point out to us are atypical, that in most of the cases where we have seen families overcome great strife, they had access to help, they didn't do it really on their own.

We have had kids in here, victims of drug abuse and alcohol—most of them stumbled into—I wish we could give them more direct access—but stumbled into a church-related program, a university-sponsored program, a health care system, something that pointed them into a private or governmental program. But in fact, the great traumas that those families encountered were overcome with some kind of outside help beyond the kin relationship that Professor Hareven described.

My concern is that those become atypical families, the ones that got the help. The rest of them became the statistics.

I think that clearly, the Davises and the Hornes pointed out, that there is an inner strength, there is a concept of family, there is a concept of love, and duty, and obligation. But even there you find the Davises relying on an association of stepparents to try to iron out some of the problems. So I am concerned about the recommendations that are made.

The other point is that economics is the constant drumbeat we hear in relation to family dysfunctions. It is something that I don't think any Member of Congress, certainly in their current life, can identify with, that is how little things can create such big problems. How a dead battery can cause your job to vanish in front of your eyes. How the failure of a responsible person to show up to take care of your child—all of the little things that happen during the day that become major traumatic events for families living on the margin.

Ms. Beatty, when you identify those things which help strong black families, those look like the things that could help any low-income family or marginal family in America. That seems critical in terms of giving some tolerance to the family to adjust to crises as they come up, you know, like unexpected bills.

In California, we now have mandatory automobile insurance. We just forgot to ask poor people whether they could afford it. So now we are finding people who are either driving uninsured or losing their jobs because they can't get to their job without being in violation of the law. We just forgot to ask them whether or not that would be possible for them to buy that mandatory insurance. Apparently, it appears that for a lot of families, the State created a real trauma. I am not suggesting we should have uninsured people driving around—but, you know, it is a question of resources.

Yes, Ms. Hareven.

Ms. **Hareven**. Mr. Chairman, I couldn't agree with you more. In addition to economics, health care is another critical issue. What we need to is view this problem not simply as a preventive problem in terms of emotional crisis in families, and not simply handle cases one by one; rather, we need to develop a kind of structure within the society that provides basic child care service and health care service, and that addresses the needs of marginal families, as you have pointed out.

Moreover, I hope that my statement about kin assistance will not accidentally be used out of context. I want to make it clear that we cannot rely these days of kin assistance without public supports. We have to use kin assistance as one source of support, but in addition, we have to provide regular institutional and professional supports to help families.

On another point, even though I applaud the psychologists' testimonies here about ways to promote strengths in families and the criteria of family strengths that they are listing, I am also a little anxious about this. Underlying these criteria seems to be a definition of what is "normal" functioning of the family. But in reality, one of the important recent changes in attitudes toward the family has been to recognize the diversity in family styles, and diversity in ways of coping. It is dangerous, therefore, to develop sterotypes of what the ideal family type is, because we have now come to recognize and accept a variety and diversity in family styles.

Chairman **Miller**. Congressman Coats.

Mr. **Coats**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have several questions. I don't want to take exception to what the chairman said about the importance of economic security to family functioning. Obviously, it is a critical element and one in which we all should be cognizant. I would like to add to that, which was said here this morning, particularly by the two families that were here, concerning the importance of attitude and commitment to making a family work. Commitment is dedication to overcoming the obstacles that are real—the obstacles that are in every family's lives and which particularly have an impact on the low-income families' lives.

To tie that into the comment that Dr. Rekers made and the chairman responded to, there is no single model program, grant, or whatever that is going to provide the wherewithal to healthy families.

But if another drumbeat should sound, it ought to be a drumbeat on attitude, the importance of a family, the centrality of the family, the need for commitment, and the need for these strengths. That drumbeat ought to sound. That drumbeat will bring about some real changes in this society.

Along that line, may I ask Dr. Hareven and Dr. Cherlin to comment on what appears to be a rapidly emerging difference of opinion among sociologists and others who are involved with these areas of children, youth, and family, about the root of the problem and where we should look to for solutions.

Dr. Hareven, in your testimony you made some statements that I would like to quote and then ask you to comment on.

You said it would be a mistake to argue that the emergence of the welfare state has caused a weakening of kinship ties. Yet, as I said, there is an emerging alternate body of thought represented by Bill Moyers' recent CBS special on the black family, by William Raspberry in the Post, and others, that would suggest that the welfare state has caused a severe weakening of kinship ties and has been very destructive for the family.

You also state that the rapid increase in the entrance of married women and mothers into the labor force has been one of the most positive developments in family life during recent times. Mothers' gainful employment is increasing the value. It is a positive asset, not only for economic reasons but also for providing satisfaction, socialability, and for forging greater continuity between the world of the home and the world of work. Divorce reflects a positive attitude toward making family life meaningful and an emphasis on the quality of couple relationships.

Norman Podhoretz wrote a recent article in the Washington Post, which, I think, was syndicated across the country, in which he cites studies by Uhlenberg and Eggebeen that are directly contradictory to your particular statements. I will just quote from that. He starts out by saying: "There's bad news for anyone who still clings to the belief that growing up in a one-parent home or where the mother is working has no harmful effects on a child."

He goes on to cite the studies indicated the sample had been taken among white teenagers—so we can't ascribe this to any kind of a focus on a minority family. He further states that "Teenagers that were studied were growing up during a period where the economic and social forces generally considered relevant all got better, the family environment improved, every one of the agreed upon factors—poverty, large number of siblings, and low parental education—took a dramatic improvement over the period of the study. The same picture of improvement was found in the schools. And finally, the amount of money spent on children by the Federal Government expanded at an unprecedent rate."

"However," he said, "this preoccupation with removing responsibility for negative outcomes from individuals has diverted attention from what may be the most critical determinant of all—the deteriorating condition of American adolescence, the bond between parent and child.

"The two sociologists, Uhlenberg and Eggebeen, find hard statistical evidence for what we all know simply from looking around; they find more and more people for whom self-fulfillment takes precedence over all other values. In these expressed values and in their major practical consequences, the refusal of parents to stay together for the sake of the children and the huge increase in the percentage of mothers workings outside the home, Uhlenberg and Eggebeen find quite reasonably a declining commitment of parents to their children."

In conclusion, "During a period when presumably beneficial changes were made in all other features of family structure, as well as in schools and Government programs, the proportion of adolescents behaving in ways destructive to themselves and others grew ever larger. Bad news, indeed, for parents who have relied on the broader economic and social forces to silence natural feelings of guilt over putting their own interests above those of their children, instead of the other way around."

That is a different school of thought than what you presented. I would like to hear your comment, and Dr. Cherlin's comment, and anybody else who wants to comment.

Ms. **HAREVEN**. Thank you very much. Those are very crucial questions. Uhlenberg is a close colleague and collaborator of mine, so I know his point of view.

The gap is not as great as it appears. When things get quoted in the popular press, some of the complexities for argument disappear.

Anyway, to start with the last point of women's work and mother's work outside the home. First of all, let's face it, the majority of women who work today do not work for self-fulfillment. They work because either they have to keep their children alive or they have to help their husbands put their children through college. In either case, whether we are talking about a single mother working, or a working wife with her husband, serious economic reasons drive these into the labor force: In the former case it is economic marginality; in the latter, inflation.

Mr. **COATS**. There is no question that is true for a proportion of those who are working, no question—no option. But it is also true that there is a large proportion working for other than economic reasons.

Ms. **HAREVEN**. All right. Yes. This is true. Now, about mothers also working for self-fulfillment in addition to the economic reasons: There is no proof that mothers' working outside the home, as such, is causing harm to their children. We have heard a great deal about latchkey children. But, in fact, a greater problem for a child is not whether the mother is working or not but, rather, as had been stated here before, whether the father is absent or not, or whether that father's income is absent or available. Women have a right to work for self-fulfillment just as much as men do.

What is more, a mother who works outside the home often brings to her children an outside view of the world and an exposure to aspects of life which helps in fact improve their own education.

Some studies have shown that a greater percentage of child abuse took place not in poor working-class families where the mother was working, but rather in middle-class, suburban families, where the mother was entrapped in a suburban house and was shifting dust most of the day. Thus, the fact that mothers are working outside the home is not in itself a cause for juvenile delinquency. Economic marginality resulting from father absence might be a more significant cause.

This raises a more general issue about the quality of time and amount of time that parents are, in fact, spending with their children. This is a general problem in American society which is not strictly related to mothers' work. As Uhlenberg and his collaborator point out, the problem is related to a general estrangement that goes on in the family; the fact that family members in every class, especially in the white-middle class, talk less to each other, spend less time with each other. This is not just because of labor force ~~participation; it is~~ because the quality of family life itself has been changing.

On the second point about divorce—I did not say that divorce in itself is a positive force. Please remember, I said that divorce is the counterpart of what death once was, in breaking up families. In the 19th century death broke up as many families as divorce does today.

I was trying to say that divorce in itself is not about to destroy the American family. As Mr. Cherlin has pointed out in his writings, the fact that divorce is followed by remarriage indicates a commitment to the family as an institution. Of course, we need to distinguish between the impact of divorce on the family's survival as an institution, and the meaning of divorce in the lives of family members going through it. In the lives of individuals, divorce is, of course, a terrible disruption, it is a great tragedy; but as far as the continuity of the family is concerned, we are witnessing a reaffirmation of family life despite divorce.

Divorce today in a way reflects a choice people make of replacing a poor marriage by a better marriage—a marriage that works. The fact that a desire for self-fulfillment and individualism is involved with it is true. But there is also another consideration in terms of the happiness of the children—whether children are happier growing up in a tension-ridden, conflicted family, or in one where they have a chance of perhaps finding themselves later in a well-functioning-blended family, such as the type we saw here today.

This is a very serious dilemma, and it is not one that I can speak about definitively, one way or the other; and it is not one that we can prevent. The consequences of divorce, on the other hand, is something we can deal with.

On your point about the pursuit of happiness, there is no question that there has been an increasing individualization in family relations. The pursuit of personal happiness today is much greater than it had been in the past. In the past, people were educated to subordinate their personal choices and their personal preferences to their families' needs as a collective unit and its survival. In this respect, there is a clear change. Perhaps the psychologists and the educators can help us understand how one can revive some of the older values of family solidarity and interdependence.

This brings me to your first point, Mr. Coats, about kinship. What I think has been pointed out about the erosion of the kinship system in the black family that you quoted, Mr. Coats, is not that the fact that the welfare state has destroyed the kinship system. In fact, the lesson to be learned from the Moyers film is that the welfare state has not provided the black family and kinship system with proper supports when there was still time to do so.

This is my real point. Over the past 15 years I have studied American families of different ethnic group closely, I have interviewed many people and have reconstructed their family histories in different communities overtime going back to the beginning of this century. What emerges very clearly is that mutual assistance among kin has been a very important force in the survival of families and in their coping with adversity.

What is important to know is that kinship alone was not enough in periods of economic crisis such as the Great Depression. In fact, the emergence of the welfare state, most notably the Social Security system, represents an acknowledgment of the inability of families and extended kin, to cope without outside assistance, without proper public supports.

In the Black family, the burden that kin have carried has been much more severe than for other ethnic families because in the black family extended kin also carried the burden of a fragmented nuclear family. Now, Moyer's film has made people aware that the black family might be reaching the end of the road, if they do not achieve the proper help. Had proper help been given sooner, we might not have been seeing what we saw in Mr. Moyers' film. How general the patterns presented in this film are, is in itself questionable, however.

There are, of course, certain areas where the welfare system has weakened the integrity of the nuclear family. This is so primarily in the area of aid for families with dependent children, for example. We know very well that having the social worker sneak into the home of a welfare family through the fire escape has led to the disruption of attempt of black families, and other welfare families to stay together. Having recognized this problem, we can improve the welfare system in a way in which it would promote unity of the family rather than disrupting it. But the emergence of Social Security itself is not the cause for the decline in kinship ties.

The U.S. welfare state is so modest by comparison to what other democracies have in the world. Our welfare state achieved in the 1930's what Bismarck's Germany and Britain had already achieved 50 years earlier. So I think we have to keep that in perspective.

Mr. CHERLIN. Let me briefly respond in a more general way, Mr. Coats.

I think that you are talking about the central problem that those of us who are concerned about American families face. That is the tension between our own individual satisfaction and group commitment. That is a real problem for us right now in America. We don't know how to deal with that one. It is a problem throughout our family relations.

I just finished a national study of grandparents, and many people feel that grandparents ought not to be moving to condominiums in Sun Belt States; rather; they ought to be staying at home with their grandchildren. But the grandparents say that they have lived long lives, they have done their work, and they deserve to go down to Florida or Arizona. They, too, are experiencing that same tension between their own personal happiness, which has become so much more important for all of us, and their commitment to the group. We need to resolve that tension, and it is very difficult to know how to do it.

I do think that economics is very important but I also think there is a role for values. I think there is a role for moral leadership—and if I might make a practical suggestion here, I think that in the case of single parent families there are a couple of causes: One is divorce, and the other is out-of-wedlock pregnancies to women who were never married, teenage pregnancies. I think the latter is the place where moral leadership on the part of governments and voluntary organizations could be more effective.

I don't think there is much that we can do that is going to convince middle-class couples not to divorce if they want to. But it may be that we can tell teenagers that we do not believe that their sexual activity and the casualness about parenthood that we sometimes see is acceptable.

So it may be that we can find strategies that draw upon both moral values and economic support, and that will help us resolve this central tension, which is really the issue of the 1980's for families.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

Mr. REKERS. I have a couple of comments. It was said by a member of this panel that divorce cannot be prevented but some of the consequences can. I am speaking here as a clinical psychologist and you are seeing some of the different disciplinary views of the same problem here—but as a psychologist, I often see that people erroneously pose this as a dilemma: Shall we continue in this family with all of our conflicts and subject the children to the conflict, or shall we get a divorce? This is done without honestly thinking about the third alternative—which a clinical psychologist or a marriage and family therapist automatically thinks of—let's see if we can help resolve the conflict, let's attempt reconciliation. Many divorces occur without any concerted attempt at reconciliation, either with the help of a professional counselor, a minister, or other community helper.

I have seen many couples in my professional practice who have prevented an impending divorce after working at reconciliation. It requires the kind of commitment that Congressman Coats was mentioning: the commitment to work through some of these severe problems.

The other thing I wanted to mention was in terms of the father's role. Again you can see that different disciplines look at the same things differently. While a sociologist may be more impressed by economics, a psychologist is more impressed with the emotional development of the child, and the emotional impact of divorce.

In my written paper I summarized Wallerstein's research which documents the kind of emotional stress, discomfort, and disruption on the child's life that occurs with divorce. Even 3 to 5 years after divorce, the children are reporting in her research that they wish that their biological parents would get back together. And the children still report that the prior time when they were in a conflicted family, in their estimation, was better than life after the divorce. There are many children in that kind of situation.

With regard to the comment that what is missing is not the father image disrupting the fatherless child, but the loss of the father's income, it seems to me that this is the point: You generally can't have the father's income unless the father is there. We need to work at providing Government policies, and tax policies, that reinforce fathers to be present in the home. This is why the unusually low dependent exemption, having been eroded by inflation, is so important to connect with a major increase.

Back when my father raised four children, he paid virtually no income tax, even though he was middle class. My income, compared to his back then, is only somewhat higher, if you correct for inflation. And yet I pay a tremendous percent of my income to Federal taxes, by compassion, even though I have five children.

Also, it is critical that we address the problem of inaccessibility in our culture. I am glad that we have had this testimony comparing American families to those in other cultures. One of the things I put in my written paper is a comment made by one of the contributors of a chapter in "Family Building" who studied cross-culture research on parental accessibility to children. He concluded that—let me quote him: "Parents in the United States spend less time with their children than any other nation in the world, perhaps with the exception of England." These are the countries in which data is available. With regard to England, it was cited as the one country that surpasses the United States in violent crime and juvenile delinquency.

It is this inaccessibility of parents for their children that disrupts the development and development of children even despite income. I remember when I worked in California—Mr. Miller's State—at UCLA in the psychology clinic. I was supervising a clinical psychology intern who presenting a child case to me—this 8-year-old boy was throwing paint into the family swimming pool, goofing up the plumbing system there, and he was throwing cans of paint on the carpet in the front room. He destroyed the plate glass window of the family home. His father was a Beverly Hills attorney, his mother a pediatrician. The parents sent the child to the clinic with a family servant, with a note saying: "We will give Johnny anything he wants if he would just shape up his behavior. He can have anything. He could have a little miniscooter, he could have this, that, or whatever."

So I said to the psychology intern: "OK, why don't you sit down with Johnny and work out a behavioral contract with him. If he shapes up his behavior, he can earn a reward, and specify it for him what he needs to do. His father is writing a blank check. They will give him anything at the end of the week." The intern asked the boy what he wanted to work for. Johnny didn't take any time at all to say what he wanted. He said he wanted a fishing trip with his dad and nothing material.

So, the emotional well-being of children, yes, does require an economic base. The family needs an economic base for survival. But beyond that, it is the emotional nuturance that develops a child who is going to be free of the kinds of serious problems that are a drain on society. Many of these fatherless children and single-parent families are consumers of resources rather than productive members of our society. If we could prevent some of that kind of suffering for them, not only would it be good for the child to avoid those problems, but it would be good for society in the long run as well.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Congressman Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. We have another panel and I have missed some of the testimony. Let me just, as someone who came in a bit late, observe briefly. I think Mr. Coats has asked the right question, or a cogent one.

Listening to your answers is somewhat like scanning your testimony. I didn't have a chance to see it in advance.

I am not sure what the differences really are. The last testimony—I don't think anybody in the world would deny that emotional nuturing is a critical element of well-being. I would hope not.

I find that people who look at this issue often bring their ideologies and try to bring them to bear on issues that really aren't particularly relevant to those ideologies. They bring different conceptions about what should be the roles of various components within society and try to place those models and those concepts onto family issues, which I am amenable to either/or solutions. Sitting here, I would ask, listening to your testimony, what are the basic disagreements among you?

What are they, if I might just ask briefly?

Mr. CHERLIN. I would say that the basic fact, as a social scientist, I would like to leave you with, is I don't believe we are going to be able to turn around many of these trends whether we want to or not. I don't believe we are going to be able to be successful——

Chairman MILLER. Trends?

Mr. CHERLIN. Trends, yes. I don't think we are going to be successful——

Mr. LEVIN. I am not sure that is what Mr. Coats wants to hear, though.

Mr. CHERLIN. You asked me what the disagreements were. I think that there are some people who believe that through prevention one can turn around trends, that through moral exhortation one can get women back in the home, perhaps, more than they are now.

I am not saying that these trends are good or bad. My experience with doing this research suggests that that a reversal is not going to occur and, therefore, perhaps one ought to deal with the situation that one sees. I think that might be one point of disagreement.

Mr. LEVIN. In a sense, I agree with you considerably, though I don't think you mean to say that moral exhortations are irrelevant.

Mr. CHERLIN, No, of course not.

Mr. LEVIN. Does someone basically disagree with your statement among the panelists?

Mr. REKERS. I would say that perhaps we are at different points on a continuum from optimism to pessimism. I think that Dr. Cherlin's statement is quite pessimistic. And it is quite tragic for the American people, because when we look at George Gallup surveys and the Harris poll that Dr. Stinnett mentioned, that the American people highly value family relationships, they value continuity in family relationships. And yet, their experience is quite different from what their commitment or what their desires are.

I heard Dr. Gallup present 3 years ago at a Senate hearing, before the Senate Subcommittee on Family and Human Services, and he said, that is the great gap. The American people want a stable marriage. That is why so many people remarry within 4 to 5 years after a divorce.

Mr. **Levin**. I agree with that, but what is the difference then?

Mr. **Rekers**. OK, the difference would be—with regard to the degree of optimism, that we could equip families to be able to prevent divorce.

Mr. **Levin**. Let me try to boil it down quickly. There is no disagreement between the two of you that the trend—it is preferable if the trend doesn't just unfold without any kind of interventions, including the expression of moral values, right?

Mr. **Rekers**. The difference is between what I hear Dr. Hareven saying, that you cannot divorce, and what Dr. Cherlin said.

Mr. **Levin**. That isn't what she said.

Mr. **Rekers**. She said you can't prevent the divorce rate—you can prevent the consequences of divorce, if I heard her correctly. I think that is a definite area of disagreement.

I think many families and individuals want their marriage to survive. They don't have the tools, they don't know how to do that; they aren't equipped with the skills. A lot could be done to provide those skills. I am not pessimistic. I am not saying that we must, as social scientists, observe these trends, document them on nice charts and journal articles, and get tenure in the university, and just watch society go by. I am more of a hopeful interventionist in that situation.

Mr. **Levin**. Let me just ask Dr. Hareven to respond then. We have got to go on.

Ms. **Hareven**. I don't really mean categorically that we cannot prevent divorce. What I mean is that you gentlemen and the Government cannot stop divorce, cannot reverse the trend, cannot force people not to divorce. But there are many ways in which one can help. I agree that counseling is a very important preventive measure, but you can also provide mechanisms that relieve some of the stresses that lead to divorce. Aside from emotional stress and basic incompatablility, there are economic pressures, there are problems of child care, there are problems for care of the elderly. There are many kinds of pressures that you gentlemen can help relieve through policy measures, so that a couple could function more successfully, except when there are emotional prolems that are involved, and then counseling is also very important.

I think that there is not a very fundamental disagreement among all of us. I think that perhaps Mr. Cherlin and I, if I may speak for him, stand on one side of the spectrum, and the other scholars here on the other end. All of us seem to be looking at the same elephant. I am concerned that we should treat the entire elephant.

I am concerned that we should understand that certain aspects of the American family are here to stay with us, and that we face them realistically; and that public policy deal with the family as a whole. Moral exhortation alone, counseling alone, and pointing out strengths to families are not going to solve the problem as long as this structure in the society will remain the same, as long as there is no adequate institutional buttressing.

I think we all share the optimism that people have a commitment to the family, that people want the family to survive, and many of us here have presented different kinds of evidence in this regard.

The question is what you gentlemen are going to help the family survive, in view of economic crisis; in view of energy crisis; in view of the fact that the problem of future age groups, future cohorts, because there is always the danger in just looking at families at this point and saying this is what they will look like in the future. In reality, we have to view these families as marching through history, as constantly changing. We have to know what will happen to the Davises and to the Hornes in the year 2000. What will happen to people who are now 30? What will they look like in the years 2000 and 2010? And, by the way, the family is not the only unit.

I think we should be aware of the fact that except for the baby boom cohort—age group—as successive cohorts reach middle age or old age, they are going to be facing very different problems than the current ones. We need, therefore, to keep this picture of family life as a moving picture; we need to plan not only for the present but for the future.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much, all of you. I think it interesting that in all of your testimony you talk about rather extensive services. We can argue about who should provide them or when you would use them or not use them. But you are talking about rather extensive services being extended to the family, and to those families that need counseling, or economic supports, what have you.

We have done a lot of work with marginal families and with economically distressed families, and others. I just saw an awful lot of committed families, but their commitment just wasn't going to carry them over. I remember the woman who testified about driving 140 miles round trip to work in a nursing home at a minimum wage job, and when her car broke down there was nothing she could do about it. And her employer said, you didn't show up, you are fired. There was no going back. There was no change. But she had, for something like 9 or 10 months, driven round trip a 140 miles in an old car, to work at a minimum wage job. There was no recourse for her.

I never, in our hearing in Washington, never for a moment doubted the strengths of these families that in many cases every day got up and went to work, and at the end of the year they were poor. There was no margin for the crises. It simply did not exist.

It goes beyond commitment. That doesn't mean to say the flip side is all governmental intervention. I think what you have really described here is a totality. It reminds me a little bit of—I remember when I was young and first married, I took off and went to Alaska to go fishing, to make my fortune. I was up there for about 2 months, and I came back. My wife asked me if I had made any money. I said, no, but geez, what a great experience. I said I never worked so hard, and I met all these people, and it was just a great experience. And she said, why don't you take some of that experience to the grocery store and see what you can put on the table for dinner. My commitment to the experience was not enough. I needed the totality of commitment and resources.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. STINNETT. I think you are right—totality—I think you have hit on the right word.

Chairman MILLER. That is a word that Congressmen understand, because our campaigns are supposed to be a totality. It is everything that you do, it is your case work, it is your newsletters, it is your campaign billboard—everything. We can't pinpoint what gets us elected, but we damn well know if we don't do them all, somehow we won't make it. I think families kind of look like a campaign here.

Mr. STINNETT. In terms of totality—I would just say that economics is very important, and I don't think anybody would disagree with that. But I would hope that we not restrict ourselves to the economic issue, because if we do, we will be doomed to failure—it is much more than that.

The other thing that I would like to say is that I hope that we not take the attitude that nothing can be done to strenghen families, because there is a great deal that can be done to strenghen families, and it is being done every day.

Chairman MILLER. Our role is not to dwell on how much can't be done. Just the opposite.

Thank you very much.

Next we will hear from a panel made up of Dr. Heather Weiss, Dr. David Olson, Dr. Salvador Minuchin, and Dr. Allan Carlson. We will take the panel in the order in which I called them. Your prepared statements will be put in the record in their entirety, and the extent to which you can summarize would be appreciated because as you can see, this panel is full of questions.

Let me just say, one of the nice things being the last panel is if you want to put your statement in the record and you comment on the previous panels please feel free to do that. That is really, in some ways, the most helpful. Proceed as you are most comfortable.

STATEMENT OF HEATHER BASTOW WEISS, ED.D., DIRECTOR, HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, CAMBRIDGE, MA

Ms. WEISS. First of all, I want to thank you very much for this opportunity. My colleagues and myself at the Harvard family research project are great admirers of the work of this committee. We read all the things that you produce and we use a lot of it in the things that we do, and I want to thank you for the work that you do.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Ms. WEISS. Second of all, I would like to say I represent a lot of different—not in the sense that you represent—but I know about a lot of different kinds of family support and education programs, the kinds of programs that other witnesses were describing earlier.

I want to tell you about those. I have three ways—as you will see in my written testimony that I have organized my presentation.

One of them is: What do we know about the ways in which the context in which the nuclear family lives affects the operation of that nuclear family?

The second thing is: What are the main characteristics of these programs that, I think, provide a great deal of support and education to families?

The third thing is: Do these programs represent the common ground on which people from a variety of places on a political and other kinds of spectrums can come together to work to strengthen families?

We have heard a lot today basically around the Beatles question comment: Do we get by with a little help from our friends? And I think we do, I think that is pretty clear.

In my testimony you will see chapter and verse—I can pile up studies that show that both extended family, and neighbors, friends, and relatives, make a great deal of difference in terms of how people cope with both everyday problems in their lives and also with crises.

I know that as a scientist, a social scientist, I am not supposed to use an "n" of one, a sample of one. But in my case I want to do that this morning to reinforce this point. I am an "n" of one, as social scientists say, I am also not in the sense that I am a product of a great amount of social support. I want to give a personal example.

I called my family on Friday night to tell them that I was going to be testifying here today, and my mother did not get on the phone. I couldn't figure out why. It turned out my mother had had a stroke and she was in the hospital. She had just had it that day. So I sort of had to sandwich this in with a whole variety of other things.

As somebody who looks at social networks and social support, I am a little bit like Moliere's Bourgeois Gentihomme—you know, I have been speaking prose all my life and they didn't know it. Well, I have had social networks and social support all my life and I didn't know it.

I outlined—I won't read it—all the kinds of things that I did and the people that provided assistance both for me, for my dad, for my mom—all the kinds of resources we could call on, and they fall into all the kinds of categories of internal assistance that have been described today.

The point of all of this is we do get by with a little help from our friends, and the kinds of interventions that we are designing to strengthen families need to acknowledge and build on that. I think having said that, it is very important to say that research also shows that for a lot of folks, they don't get by with a little help from their friends—it takes a lot more.

I want to cite one woman's work—Susan Crockenberg from California. She has looked at some of the ways in which social support affects maternal child interaction in single parent teen black families. What she finds is that up to a certain point, to certain stress levels, social support seems to have beneficial consequences for maternal child interaction—beyond a certain stress level, and that's socioeconomics stress and a lot of the other kinds of stress people have talked about here today—all the social support in the world from your informal network doesn't get you over the hump.

So I think that with all the kinds of changes in family structure and composition that we have talked about here today, it is clear that we get by with a little help from our friends—they are necessary, but lots of people they aren't sufficient. The kinds of interventions we design need to build on those sources of family strength. We need to recognize—and, I think, researchers can document this—that the availability of various kinds of support, both formal, informal, has consequences for internal family dynamics, and is a main contributor to family strength.

Let me cite some of the relevant child development research that has been done. People have looked at different measures of social support, both internal to the family, that is, from husbands—usually measured as wives' perceptions of support from husbands—and external from neighbors and other informal kinds of sources—and been able to directly relate those positive supports to different kinds of family dynamics.

The kinds of programs that we at the Harvard family research project have been looking at usually acknowledge the importance of informal and peer support; they are largely grassroots programs designed to provide education and support to families. They range from a program called Parents Place that meets in the basement of a church in White Plains, NY, where mothers can drop in, spend some time with their children, and also spend some time with other mothers in a mothers group while their kids are supervised.

At the other end of the continuum for more at-risk families is a program in Elmira, NY, called the prenatal and early intervention project. It is based on nurse home visitors going out to families, usually single, young women, teen mothers, who are about to have babies. The nurses provide a great deal of intensive professionally based health and educational information and support. In addition, they work with the mothers to identify, prior to the birth of their child, people in their own social networks that they call on when the going gets tough. The point being that they indicate to these mothers who are at high risk for abuse and neglect, that the times may get rough as a single parent, so let's start looking at your social network and identifying people that you can call on to help out.

They also try to connect and familiarize these young mothers with some of the other public agencies in the community where they can also get support. So in this case, that project is built on a variety of kinds of support—professional, formal and informal, and on connecting people to the agencies that are available to help them in their community.

These are the kinds of programs that, I think, make up kind of a middle ground and help families cope with both crises and day-today kinds of problems.

Another very important thing they do is to offer praise and validation for what people are doing successfully in their family lives. I have done a lot of work talking to parents about their perceptions of these kinds of programs, and what I find is that they talk about support in terms of information, somebody that I can share my problems with, but also that, by and large, both parents and some of the professionals involved in these programs, report part of their value lies in the fact they communicate "hey, you are doing a good job as a parent, it is tough, and you are doing a good job."

Another program—Family Matters—in Syracuse, NY, tries to empower parents and strengthen families, and validate what they are doing in a very simple kind of way. A lot of family support and education programs, rightly so, come in with canned curriculum that they have developed about child development and parenting and family issues. What Family Matters does is visit families with some curriculum but they also say to families, look, how are you working with your child around, say, gross motor development? Although I don't think they would use the term gross motor development! What are you doing to exercise with your kid?

The parent will say, well, I am doing this and that.

The home visitor then asks, "Do you mind if I share that with other families?" The Home Visitor then writes up the parent's idea on activity and it gets circulated to all the other families that are part of this project.

So one of the ways Family Matters empowers families is by eliciting some of the things the parents can share and be proud of sharing with other families. That is a concrete example of what, I think, empowerment means in the activities of family support and education programs.

I have never said anything in 5 minutes in my life and I have lots of AT&T telephone bills that will attest to that.

Chairman Miller. You are going to keep your record intact.

Ms. Weiss. The last thing I want to say is this: Congressman Levin said, what are the differences here? As somebody who is trying to support these programs, figure out what they do, what we can expect them to do, and not expect them to do, and in some ways advocate for them on the basis of the best information I can get about their effectiveness. I naturally raise questions about how these programs contribute to solving family-related social problems.

As I look at suggestions about what we ought to be doing for families that come from people like Senator Moynihan, sociologists like the Bergers, the American Enterprise Institute, and child development researchers like Hobbs and his colleagues, one of the things that surprised me was how much the kinds of things that they were saying had in common. There were major differences, but there were also a fair number of things that they had in common. I want to talk about some of them quickly.

First, these commentators argue that values as much or more than research results should inform family policy initiatives. Examining the values they put forth, although they are often general in nature, there is more overlap among them than might have been expected. There is strong agreement, for example, on the pivotal role that the family plays in child development and in the creation and maintenance of the sense of community necessary for societal survival. Juxtaposing their various discussions with the values expressed in the design and practice of many family support and education programs, it is clear that the programs operationalize many of the values and directions suggested by these family policy analysts. As a result, these programs can and are serving as a middle ground on which some communities and States are standing to address diverse family needs for support and education. Therefore, I think, these programs have an important role to play as we think through public policies to strengthen all children and families.

One of them is, there is strong agreement on the pivotal role the family plays in child development and in the creation and maintenance of the sense of community necessary for societal survival.

Although the stated values among all these different people are admittedly general in nature, there is more overlap than I at least would have anticipated.

Finally, the values that these analysts share are central and are operationalized in many of the kinds of programs that I am talking about in my written testimony.

I think that gives us a middle ground on which we can begin to work to strengthen families. I think it is important that we start looking for that middle ground, recognizing that values and evidence, and a variety of other things, play a part in defining that middle ground.

Let me say from the work that we do looking at different State initiatives, this is beginning to happen in a variety of States around the country, where people from both sides of the legislative aisle are getting together to set up preventive family support and education programs, labeled as such, to try and prevent and a variety of family and child disorders with this kind of a peer and professional approach.

How did I do in terms of time?

[Prepared statement of Heather Weiss follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HEATHER BASTOW WEISS, ED.D., DIRECTOR, HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, CAMBRIDGE, MA

The past dozen years have seen the proliferation of family support and education programs in a wide variety of settings, including schools, drop-in centers, homes, churches, hospitals, and community centers. As the title of a recent resource guide describing these programs suggests, they are designed as *Programs to Strengthen Families* (Zigler, Weiss, & Kagan, 1983). Underlying these programs is the ecological principle that while the family is the primary institution shaping a child's development, family support and education programs can effectively promote development by helping parents to provide the best possible environment for the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Travers & Light, 1982). These family- as opposed to child-oriented programs aim to achieve a variety of interrelated ends, including the enhancement of child health and development, prevention of various child and family dysfunctions such as abuse and neglect, the enhancement of parental knowledge, self-esteem, and communication, and the promotion of increased informal and formal community support for families.

These typically grass-roots programs provide social support as social support researchers define this concept (Cleary, in press): They supply information (e.g., about child health and development, parenting skills, family communication); emotional support (e.g., attention, reinforcement, and feedback for adults in their family roles); and instrumental assistance (e.g., transportation, referrals to other services). The more interpersonal definition of social support set forth by Cobb (1976) in fact captures some of the feelings expressed by participants in these programs, to wit: That the program has reinforced the sense that they are "cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and part of a network of communication and mutual obligation." (p. 300)

To take the measure of these programs and indicate the central place they have for those considering the issue of how to strengthen families, this statement addresses three questions:

1. What do we know about the ways in which context, defined as factors outside the nuclear family, affect a family's capacity to rear their children and build a fulfilling family life—in short, in the Beatles's terms—do we get by with a little help from our friends?
2. What are the main characteristics of family support and education programs and how do they strengthen, reinforce, and empower families?
3. Do these programs offer a common ground on which policy makers from a variety of perspectives can stand in order to promote the development of children and families?

Do We Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends? And Family, Neighbors, Co-Workers, etc.

An increasing number of studies point to the key role played by informal support systems in sustaining family life. Examining this research it is clear that one's extended family continues to be a major and often preferred source of many kinds of assistance. In her study of working mothers in single- and two-parent families, Kamerman found, for example, that "* * * although they frequently mention neighbors or friends as providing important help, it is clear from the interviews that the single most important source of help for working mothers are relatives and family. Whether for child care purposes, emergencies, advice, or just encouragement and sympathy, most of these women view 'family' as an essential support system. * * *" (1980, p. 108)

More than a decade ago, Hill and his colleagues (Hill, Foote, Aldous, Carlson, & Macdonald, 1970) studied approximately 300 families distributed across three generations: grandparents, parents, and children. The results provide impressive evidence indicating the degree to which family members help one another. When Hill added exchanges with extended family members such as siblings and cousins, kin exchanges accounted for 70% of all reported instances of help. When families were asked where they preferred to turn for assistance in a crisis, each generation's first choice was kin. Carol Stack (1974) documented the ways in which a community of poor black families and friends helped one another. She found that kin, and non-kin regarded as kin, built a cooperative and independent network engaging in a complex and long-term pattern of reciprocity and exchange that allowed them to survive severe economic deprivation. Similarly, in her study of 305 middle-class black families, McAdoo (1978) found that kin were the most important source of help.

A growing body of research on child development, families, and social support indicates the important role played not only by family, but also by friends, co-workers, neighbors, acquaintances, etc. both for everyday family functioning and in coping with crises. Informal support has been shown to figure in such diverse areas as: Locating and assessing child care (Collins and Pancoast, 1976), the adjustment of children following divorce (Hetherington, 1981), the ease of pregnancy and delivery (Norbeck& Tilden, 1983) and in the successful adjustment of families with handicapped children (Bristol, 1984). The lack of social support, or what Garbarino and Sherman (1980) refer to as "social impoverishment"—few social relationships and exchanges with others and the perception that help would not be forthcoming if needed—has been related to higher incidents of child abuse and neglect.

It is not news that supportive interactions are important for human health and development; "what is new," as Cobb (1976) points out, "is the assembling of hard evidence that adequate social support can protect people in crises from a wide variety of pathological states: from low birthweight to death, from arthritis through tuberculosis to depression, alcoholism and other psychiatric illness" (p. 310). Child development researchers, family sociologists, and family support and education program evaluators are currently mapping the complex ways in which informal support directly and indirectly affects internal family functioning in areas such as maternal-child interaction, parenting attitudes and adult self-esteem (for a review of this research see Weiss & Jacobs, 1983; Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Social support research is in its infancy, and we have only the most primitive sense of the contribution of support to family coping and well-being. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence that informal, naturally-occurring support from family and friends plays an important role in developing and maintaining strong families.

It is also clear that informal social support is unevenly distributed and that it is sometimes unavailable or insufficient. For example, in her research on teenage mothers and their infants, Crockenberg (1984) found that social support had positive effects on mother-child interaction only for those mothers with relatively little stress in their lives. As she concludes, " One implication of this analysis may be that the extraordinarily high levels of stress in particular populations cannot be ameliorated by the type of support usually provided by families." (p. 22) Increased stress on all families and greater geographic mobility and isolation have had negative effects on supportive social ties. It is harder for everybody, and impossible for some, to get by simply with naturally-occurring informal support.

One grass-roots response to this has been the recent proliferation of family support and education programs in the form of drop-in centers, parent support groups, home visit programs, information and referral services, warmlines, etc. These preventive programs and the emerging family support movement of which they are a part, exemplify an emerging new paradigm for the human services, one undergirded by "the principle that the [present] need is to create formal support systems that generate and strengthen informal support systems, that in turn reduce the need for the formal system." (Bronfenbrenner & Weiss, 1983, p. 405).

The family support movement includes thousands of programs building on family strengths and providing a variety of kinds of formal and informal information and support. These programs range from Parents Place, a drop-in center for parents with children under five housed in a church in White Plains, New York, to much more intensive services such as those provided by the Prenatal and early Infancy home visit project for high-risk young mothers upstate in Elmira, NY. As a recent national program survey conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project (see attachments for a summary of some survey results) shows, these programs offer a variety of services at the core of which are parent and child development education, networking and opportunities for parents and sometimes families to meet one another, and information and referral to other services. Another important aspect of these programs is their grass-roots nature—they are carefully grounded in local needs, resources, and circumstances. As a result, they are diverse and difficult to classify, but the majority do share some overarching characteristics and common operating assumptions.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS AND METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

Family support and education programs reflect the trend toward more family- rather than individually-focussed intervention efforts. They are family-oriented in that they attempt to work with the family as a whole or because they provide support to people in their family roles. They recognize the stresses and strains and the rewards of family life and offer assistance grounded in the family's own efforts and strengths. Interviwes with mothers in one such program indicate that in addition to providing valuable child development and parenting information, they also offered the mothers the oportunity to ventilate problems and to receive praise and reinforcement for their parenting efforts. Many shape their interventions to promote adult and family as well as child development. These programs underscore the interdependent relationship between family and community while at the same time attempting to frame this relationship in such a way as to support and respect the family's role and prerogatives.

They do this in many ways, one of the foremost of which involves qualities inherent in their relationship with parents.

"Services for young children and families can be viewed as varying along a continuum with respect to sources of support and the relationship between the parents and those who work with them. This continuum ranges from a unilateral relationship between the parent and a professional source of assistance (wherein the parent is viewed as the passive recipient of professional expertise) through bilateral relationships between parents and professionals (wherein the parent is seen as a partner with his or her own expertise about the child) to more multilateral araangements whereby information and support comes from professionals, peers, and other sources of informal support (wherein the parent is both the recipient and provider of support to others through peer support and informal helping arrangements." (Zigler & Weiss, 1985, pp. 171-192.)

These programs have attempted to incorporate a non-deficit service philosophy whereby professionals do things not to but with parents. In their emphasis on self/mutual help and building informal support, these programs express the view that families can do a great deal for themselves and for each other. As a result, they are not replacing but rather redefining the roles of professionals and more formal support services (See Whittaker, 1985 for a discussion of their impact on child welfare services).

The programs emphasize prevention and enhancement rather than remediation. As knowledge about the antecedents of child health and development, family stability and coping and effective parenting accumulates through both research and practice, these programs are building on it to develop interventions designed to prevent a variety of child and family problems. They premised on the view that they are likely to be cost-effective because they reduce the need for later, more financially and costly interventions. They typically make judicious use of professional expertise and often couple it with volunteers and/or peers in a variety of roles from lay home visitor to parent group participant, warmline volunteer and volunteer group leaders.

Minnesota Early Learning Design, an education and support program for new parents, is a good example. Professionals train experienced parents to serve as volunteer leaders in new parent groups. The professionals provide training and backup services, but the majority of the work is done by non-professional volunteers. The Prenatal/Early Infancy Project in New York is staffed by nurse home visitors, but in addition to the services they provide, they encourage new single mothers to identify and develop their own informal networks so they have someone to turn to if parenting becomes overwhelming (Olds, 1981). The Family Matters Project in its work in Syracuse, New York, operationalized a non-deficit family empowerment approach through both home visits and the development of neighborhood-based family support groups. The home visitors elicited ideas of things to do with children from parents and in turn wrote them up for all project parents. The groups shared experinces and lobbied for neighborhood improvements, such as fencing for dangerous creek.

Family support and education programs work with and often spring from or are part of the small-scale institutions that are a crucial part of the enduring structure of community life. These institutions, which Berger and Neuhaus (1977) have labelled "mediating structures," include the neighborhood, the church, and voluntary organizations. As these authors argue, "one of the most debilitating results of modernization is a feeling of powerlessness in the fact of institutions controlled by those whom we do not know and whose values we often do not share." (p. 7) The value of many locally-based family support and education programs in fact lies in their capacity to serve as intermediaries for families as they deal with large bureaucratic institutions such as the government and the corporation. They also provide kinds of support that are frequently not available from other agencies and professionals. Peer support for parents with children in neonatal intensive care units is a case in point. Parent support groups and peer matching efforts can provide empathic support and coping skills which busy neonatologists cannot (Boukydis, 1983) In short, in many communities, these hybrid programs have themselves become mediating structures which remake and reinforce socialities and link families to various formal and informal community services. As such, they strengthen the local community infrastructure and attune it to the needs and resources of local families.

These programs serve many kinds of families. Some serve everyone with children within a particular age range in the geographic area, others are targetted to groups considered to be at high risk because of some actual or potential child or family problem. One of the things that is clear to many who work with families is that these programs fill a real need, whether it be that of a middle class mother who just needs a place to dorp in and meet and talk with other mothers or that of a low-income teen mother who requires more intensive support and education services. There is inevitably a tension between primary prevention and intensive services for high risk groups, paricularly when resources are scarce. What is necessary is a graduated set of programs available in the community; more intensive services are necessary for high risk families and as a result they cost more than some of the parent groups and the like. Both are necessary and we have to figure out how to maintain them. As more and more evidence on the effectiveness of these programs, particularly their cost effectiveness, becomes available, their contribution both to family strength and the public welfare will be increasingly apparent. (For a detailed review of the evidence on family support program effectiveness, see Weiss & Jacobs, 1984.)

FAMILY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A MIDDLE GROUND FOR FAMILY POLICY?

Many of the major social policy issues of the late twentieth century center on questions about the respective roles of the family and other institutions, particularly the government, in the care of dependents. We are now at a point where it is necessary to rethink some of the arrangements of the modern welfare State; like our counterparts in Western Europe, we "are going through a renegotiation of the division of labor between institutions and individuals which adds up to a new phase of transition for industrial society." This renegotiation is raising fundamental questions about the relationship between governmental and nongovernmental provision of support to the institutions which constitute the social infrastructure—including families, communities, and the formal and informal groups at the core of civic life. Some of the most creative thinking about this renegotiation is curently going on among the developers of grass-roots family support and education programs.

These programs recognize that contemporary families are in a paradoxical situation; they are faced with increasing stress at the same time that they are being asked to assume a larger role in the care of dependents. The steady proliferation of family support and education programs from the bottom or grass-roots up, instead of from the federal top-down, is a reflection of a more systemic reaction to this paradox and of the fundamental recognition of the increasing need to provide education and support to families, particularly those with young children, in a realigned welfare state. These programs also reflect broader national debates about social policy for families in that they have integrated two questions— what should government or community do for families and what should families do for themselves—into one: what can government and other community institutions do to enhance the family's capacity to help itself and others?

A great deal has been written about the changing American family from a variety of perspectives. Examining some of the material about how to strengthen families produced by social scientists, policy makers and others, representing both conservative and liberal perspectives, several points are evident. First, many acknowledge and argue that values, as well as evidence of program or policy effectiveness, are the standards against which to judge actual and proposed programs (Moynihan, 1985; Berger & Berger, 1984; Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne, & Weeks, 1984; Skerry, 1983; Haskins & Adams, 1983). The comparative examination of the values that these commentators put forth as necessary undergirding for family program and policy initiatives is very instructive for three reasons:

1. It reveals that there is strong agreement on the pivotal role the family plays in child development and in the creation and maintenance of the sense of community necessary for societal survival.
2. Although the stated values are admittedly of a general nature, there is more overlap among them that might have been anticipated.
3. The values these analysts share are central to and operationalized by many of the aforementioned new breed of family support and education programs.

As such, these programs represent a common ground on which representatives of a variety of viewpoints can stand together to reinforce existing and create new family support and education programs and policies to strengthen families. Further, they may serve as starting points from which communities can begin to assess and address the needs of all their families. And in fact, they are serving as a common ground in a number of states around the country where legislators from all political persuasions are uniting around preventive family support initiatives. These state initiatives refelct the recognition that some public support from governmental and from nongovernmental community institutions is necessary for these programs, and that support can serve as leverage to obtain resources from other sources.

Evidence about program effectiveness, particularly with respect to the ways in which these programs strengthen not only children but families and communities, is also important to promote. Researchers and program practitioners now have enough questions in common about the sources and consequences of social support for families to be about to design mutually beneficial and productive action research partnerships to further knowledge, family policy, and practice. Some of the questions currently at the three-way intersection of knowledge, policy and practice include the following: "What is the relative importance of internal (to the family) versus external support for parenting (Belsky, 1984; Crnic & Greenberg, in press), and what are the implications of this for the design of family support programs—for example: Should programs be designed to support and reinforce the father's role in the family because this would significantly enhance the support available for mothers? Should support programs for teenage mothers include a component for grandmothers and/or fathers, the two most often mentioned sources of support these mothers report they have (Colletta, 1981; Crockenberg, in press)? How important are reciprocity and change to social support processes and programs? (Are programs in which parents have to give as well as receive information and support better at building parental self-esteem and competence, and in promoting informal support networks (Weiss, 1979)? What is the relationship between family functioning and social support? As Bronfenbrenner (1984) has suggested, future 'research designs must take into account the possibility that causal processes may be operating in the reverse direction, with supportive social networks or participation in a family support program being a creation rather than a condition of constructive family functioning' (p. 43). What are the relationships between levels and sources of strees and support, and different measures of child and family development? Are there some families who are so stressed economically, emotionally, and otherwise that they do not benefit from available informal social support (Crockenberg, in press) or from formal support interventions as now designed? Is it necessary to achieve a certain threshold whereby basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter are met before families can benefit from social support interventions? Finally, under what familial conditions does support become a source of stress? Belle (1982) has pointed out, for example, that poor single mothers' efforts to maintain a supportive social network are often a significant source of stress (Zigler, Weiss, pp. 198-199).

Richard Titmuss, a foremost analyst of social programs, has argued that social policy should promote social altruism (1970). The programs described here seem to have that potential. To test it, we should pay close attention to both the strengths and weaknesses of these programs and keep asking both what they can and cannot do. Moreover, we need to ask about their efficiency, equity, distribution, and fairness. Perhaps in this way we can reset the balance between individuals and government in a way that brings out the best in both and that respects and strengthens families and communities.

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Harvard Family Research Project was begun in 1983 in an effort to collect, review, synthesize, and disseminate information about a burgeoning and very promising set of preventive programs designed to provide support and education to families with pre-adolescent children. The Project's current research activities, described below, are meant for a diverse audience of policy markers, program personnel, researchers, and funding agencies.

Family support and education programs vary on many indices, including setting (i.e. schools, hospitals, day care centers, mental health facilities, churches, etc.), staff backgrounds (i.e. "at risk," "normal," low-income, handicapped, etc.), target populations (i.e. psychology, early childhood education, social work, medicine, parenting experience, etc.) and goals (i.e. prevention to treatment; changes in individuals, families, and communities). However, these programs also share a number of common defining characteristics, including the following:

1. They demonstrate an ecological approach to human development in that they work with parents and families to promote child development by strengthening a family's child-rearing capacities;
2. They are typically grass-roots programs grounded in local needs and resources, even when they have a federal or state sponsor;
3. They provide social support, as social support researchers define the concept—in terms of informational, emotional, and instrumental support;
4. They emphasize prevention and family maintenance;
5. They have developed innovative and multilateral approaches to service delivery through such means as peer support, creative uses of volunteers and professionals, and the promotion of informal networks; and
6. They underscore the interdependent relationship between family and community (including various service providers) while at the same time attempting to frame this relationship in such a way as to support and respect the family's role and prerogatives.

Preliminary evaluation evidence suggests that these programs are promising, as does their capacity to draw support from a variety of political and policy perspectives. These programs aim to achieve a variety of interrelated ends, including the enhancement of child health and development, prevention of various child and family dysfunctions such as abuse and neglect, the promotion of the child's cognitive and social development, the enhancement of parental knowledge, self-esteem and communication, and increased community support for families.

The programs range from intensive and comprehensive efforts to promote early health and development, such as the Brookline Early Education Project and the Prenatal/Early Intervention Project, to less intensive parent support groups designed for new parents such as Minnesota Early Learning Design (MELD), and efforts to promote informal networking among parents.

In addition to tracking the development and institutionalization of these programs, accumulating differentiated evidence of their effectiveness and making recommendations about appropriate evaluation strategies, the Harvard Family Research Project has begun several projects designed to get a better understanding of the potential of these family-oriented programs. These projects have been undertaken with assistance from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. The specific projects include:

1. *A national review of family support and education program evaluation.* The sources for this review include the analysis of the Project's national survey of family support programs and their evaluations as well as analysis of evidence from specific programs.

2. *Preparation of a book entitled Evaluating Family Programs,* to be published in early 1987. The book proposes various types of measures and assessment strategies for programs, includes case studies of "flagship" evaluations, and examines selected theoretical, cultural, and measurement issues inherent in family support and education programs.

3. *The examination of family support and education programs within different institutions, particularly schools and day care settings.* After locating a variety of program models, this study will look at issues such as the incentives and disincentives for local school systems to get involved in such programs, the relation of the programs to other community services, and at the kinds of evidence of effectiveness required for school personnel, community spokespersons, and parents.

National Family Support and
Education Program Survey
N = 574

Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cambridge, MA 02138
February 22, 1986
Prepared by, Steven J. Hite, Ed.D.

Selected Results of the Frequency and Distribution Runs

Variable	Results
Three most common service delivery settings	Home Educational Facility Community Agency
Year FS&E programs began service	1878 to 1984 median = 1979 mode = 1982
Three most frequently provided services	Parent/Child Dev. Education Networking for Parents Info./referral to community services
Three least frequently provided services	Homemaker services Respite child care Father's support groups
Size of program budget	up to $100 K = 71.1% $100 K to $200 K = 12.6% $200 K to $300 K = 5.5% $300 K to $400 K = 5.0% $400 K to $1.9 M = 5.8% budgets under $10 K = 20.6% mean = $124,346 median = $54,146
Three most common budget sources	State government (incl. Fed. $) Client paid fees Foundations/private agencies
Three most common fields of staff training	Education Social work Psychology
Three least common fields of staff training	Religion/Clergy Medicine Research/Evaluation
Income distribution of clientele	$0 to $9,999 = 33.4% $10,000 to $19,999 = 26.8% $20,000 to $34,999 = 25.7% $35,00 or above = 13.8%

Frequency of program/client contact by program intervention orientation

% of Total sample (n=574) =>	Enhance (50.6%)	Prevent (24.3%)	Treat (25.1%)
Daily	9.0%	5.5%	11.4%
Several times/week	16.0%	20.5%	31.6%
Once per week	43.8%	41.1%	40.5%
Every two weeks	7.6%	12.3%	10.1%
Monthly	13.2%	9.6%	2.5%
Every two months	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%
Several times/year	9.7%	9.6%	3.8%

4. *A series of case studies of innovative State sponsored preventive programs for families.* In the present political climate, responsibility for new initiatives for families has increasingly centered at the State level. In order to better understand the rationales, incentives and disincentives, and State relations with local programs, the Project is undertaking this series of case studies. Some of the issues to be addressed include decisions about how to target programs, single versus interagency sponsorship, the life histories of successfully institutionalized pilot programs, and the role of evidence of effectiveness for the initiation, maintenance, and dissemination of programs.

5. *A study of home visit "technology."* Home visits are a frequently used means of providing support and education to families but we know remarkably little about them as a service strategy. This project will analyze their history, distribution, rationales, strengths, and limitations.

6. *Seminar series and topical study groups.* In addition to conducting a bi-monthly seminar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Project is establishing two small study groups to bring together groups who have much in common but rarely meet. One is entitled "Reconciling Child Development and Family Systems Theory," and the other is "Translating Social Support Research Into Program Practice."

PROGRAMS TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES: A RESOURCE GUIDE

Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Family Support Project.—Principal Investigators: Edward F. Zigler, Heather B. Weiss, Sharon Lynn Kagan.

In collaboration with: Family Resource Coalition Director Linda Lipton; Family Support Project Director Heather Weiss; Editor Carol Payne.

Principal Writers: Family Support Project: Rachel Hobart, Deborah Witkin, Carol Payne, Heather Weiss, Pat Correa, Laurie Hart Docknevich; Family Resource Coalition: Elise Kirban.

Available from The Family Resource Coalition, 230 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1625, Chicago, IL 60601.

PREFACE BY HEATHER B. WEISS

Contemporary American families face a great deal of stress as they attempt to raise their children and build a fulfilling family life. These often cumulative and interrelated pressures stem from the workplace, increased mobility and isolation, unemployment, and poverty or economic uncertainty, as well as from recent demographic changes, including the rise in the number of working mother, female-headed households, and teenage parents. In the face of these pressures, a new breed of programs aimed at strengthening families has been growing up around the country. Some argue that these programs constitute a significant, if infant, movement that will have a major impact on the health, development and well-being of American families. This resource guide has been designed to familiarize a broad audience with these programs and with the positive force they represent for American children and their families.

The Origins of the Guide.—There are hundreds of family support programs, but information about them is scattered and frequently inaccessible. Therefore, the Family Support Project of the Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy and the Family Resource Coalition have collected information about varied programs in order to acquaint a wide audience with specific programs and the broader phenomenon of the family support movement. It is our contention that many good and diverse program models and practices currently exist, aspects of which can be adapted to suit other families and communities. While no specific model or concept is necessarily appropriate for the needs and resources of every community, it is not necessary to start completely from scratch. In fact, it is part of the accumulating wisdom of these programs that selective adaptation, rather than exact replication, is more likely to result in a successful program.

The Guide's Uses and Audience.—This guide has been designed to be of use to three audiences. The first consists of anyone interested in starting a new program or adding a family support component to an existing one. The guide contains detailed information about many aspects of the programs. For those who desire more, many programs described here have additional materials, as well as advice and recommendations, that they are willing to share with those who contact them. This book is a guide, not a directory of programs. Therefore many outstanding programs are not included. (See the Introduction for a discussion of how the programs were chosen for the guide.) We encourage you to seek information about additional programs from the Family Resource Coalition or from other community, state, and national organizations concerned with children and families. The development of networks among families and among community agencies is a hallmark of many family support programs. It is our hope that this guide will foster links and information-sharing among new and existing programs across communities and states.

Insofar as the programs described help one to take the measure of the family support movement, the guide will also be of interest to those concerned with policy and services for children and families. While they are a deliberately diverse set of programs, they also have many noteworthy features for those redesigning human services. For example, the majority of the programs are hybrids: they represent some form of partnership between governmental and nongovernmental resources to meet the needs of families. Many have developed creative ways to involve volunteers as a integral part of the program staff. An attitude to families that stresses their strengths rather than an exclusive focus on their problems or weaknesses also characterizes many of them. In fact, the many common charecteristics and attitudes embodied in these programs argue for the existence of a movement, not just a collection of diverse programs.

The guide's third audience is program evaluators. The question of how to evaluate family support programs represents one of the biggest challenges for both individual programs and the family support movement as a whole. Researchers and evaluators suggest, on the basis of limited evidence, that such programs are promising. Nonetheless, the value of these programs will be more fully documented and understood when sensitive and systematic evaluation strategies are developed that are more capable of measuring what the programs do. Such evaluations will go beyond the simple question of what works, to a more differentiated set of questions: what works for whom, when, how and why? (Weiss, 1983) The programs in the guide present a catalog of challenging evaluation problems for programs and evaluators to solve together.

The Guide's Format and Sources of Information.—The guide is organized into eight chapters, one for each program type. At the start of each chapter, there is a grid that provides an overview of the programs. Following the grid, there is a detailed description of each program, including recommendations to others and a list of available materials. The descriptions were written on the basis of information provided by the programs in response to a specially designed survey: they were supplemented by avaialble program materials. Some of the information about the family support movement and the problems encountered by programs is drawn from presentations at a national conference. "Family Support Programs. The State of the Art," convened by the Family Support Project and held at Yale University in May of 1982.

INTRODUCTION BY HEATHER B. WEISS

Just what qualifies as a family support program is not self-evident. Theoretically, anything from income support programs such as Aid for Families With Dependent Children to corporate flexitime policies could wear the label "family support." Therefore, the first section of this introduction presents the criteria that were used to define family support programs and to choose the specific programs for the guide. The second section discusses the evolution of these programs, their shared characteristics, and some of the problems that programs have encountered. The concluding section examines three major challenges facing the family support movement.

Defining Family Support Programs and Choosing Programs for the Resource Guide

In order to produce a manageable guide and one that emphasizes innovative and relatively adaptable programs, project staff chose to focus on a subset of all possible programs defined by the following criteria. We limited ourselves to programs that provide direct services to families, thus eliminating forms of family support such as income support programs or part-time work policies. We narrowed our purview to include primarily programs that serve families with children under twelve. Then we sought programs characterized by a preventive orientation and those that reflect the trend toward intervention efforts focused more on families than on individuals. Programs in the guide are family-focused because they work with more than one family member or because they provide support to people in their family roles. We also looked for programs which make substantial use of volunteers and that recognize that parents can do a great deal for themselves and each other through networking, peer support, and information and referral services. We sought programs that are sensitive to the community ecology and that have demonstrated the capacity to work with and develop the small-scale institutions which are a crucial part of the enduring structure of community life. Those institutions, which Bergher and Neuhaus (1977) have labelled "mediating structures," include the neighborhood, church, and voluntary organizations. Because such programs, grounded in the local community, are "people-sized" and reflective of community values and commitments, they can be powerful and effective advocates for families.

Narrowing the definition of family support programs in this way did not produce a set of programs that are the province of any one professional group. In addition to drawing on the knowledge and skills of parents, they also benefit from the expertise of early childhood educators, teachers, child development specialists, pediatricians, psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, parent educators, psychologists, sociologists and child welfare specialists. Nor did such limitations constrict the types of families served (e.g. single, two-parent, parents of handicapped, new parents), the program's issues and goals (e.g. parent education, child abuse prevention, home and school linkages), their service delivery mechanisms (e.g. parent groups, home visits, warm line, newsletter), the program'scommunity settings (e.g. YWCA's, schools, museums, community development agencies, drop-in centers, churches, hospitals, mental health centers) or their comprehensiveness.

Project staff then organized the program information to create a typology of family-oriented interventions. After grappling with considerable overlap among the programs on fundamental dimensions such as program goals, service components and settings, we settled on eight types to represent and differentiate family support programs.

The types of programs are: Prenatal and infant development; Child abuse and neglect prevention; Early childhood education; Parent education and support; Home, school, and community linkages; Families with special needs; Neighborhood-based, mutual help and informal support; and Family-oriented day care.

Given the nature and complexity of these family support programs, some fit into more than one type, but all fit into at least one.

In order to have a varied collection of each type of program, we then chose specific program examples that would differ according to the following criteria: program setting and auspices; region and state; urban, suburban or rural location; funding sources; service delivery mechanisms; use of volunteers and kinds of professional involvement; budget size; and the kinds of families served defined in racial, ethnic and socioeconomic terms. The resulting collection represents only a fraction of the possible programs, but limitations on the length of the resource guide have meant that hundreds of excellent ones are not included.

The Evolution and Basic Characteristics of Family Support Programs

Family support programs of the sort presented here are a relatively recent phenomenon; over two-thirds of the programs in the guide began after 1974. They have their origins in earlier programs, such as the parent education efforts of the 1920's and 1930's and War on Poverty programs such as Head Start. They are also more generally reflective of a number of recent trends in social services. These trends include a move toward self-help and mutual aid groups, increased emphasis on service access and coordination through information and referral services, a focus on health and mental health maintenance and wellness, and a growing interest in providing preventive services as a less expensive alternative to subsequent, more costly treatment programs. Recent child development research has also contributed to the evolution of these programs; for example, it has increased awareness and understanding of parent-child bonding, of children's early capabilities and learning processes, and has underscored the importance of the parent and of parent-child interaction in the child's development. The following section will trace the evolution of the programs and describe some of the common characteristics and problems that integrate them into a new movement which may, in turn, exert its own influence on other services and policies for children and families.

One of the most striking things about the recent evolution of these programs is their emphasis on a more ecological approach. This approach is based on the ecological principle that while the family is the primary institution that determines a child's development, other institutions impinge on it and affect the family's capacity to nurture and rear its children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Zigler and Berman, 1983). The movement toward more ecological intervention strategies is reflected in the shift from the focus on individuals, usually the child, to an emphasis on the relationship and interaction between parent and child, and increasingly, on the relationship between the family and formal and informal sources of support for them within the community. For example, initial Head Start programs and other early education intervention efforts in the 1960's were often center-based and concerned almost exclusively with the child. Experience with these programs, as well as accumulating research evidence, widened the focus to include center and home-based parent education and support components aimed at increasing parental knowledge and at recognizing and reinforcing the parental role in child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Goodson and Hess, 1975). By the early 1970's, recognition of the fundamental role of the parent in child development was evident in many programs, including the Child and Family Resource Center version of Head Start. Many factors contributed to the establishment of the link between families and other formal and informal community supports; for example, the power and success of mutual help groups; recognition of the sense of loneliness and isolation that many mothers of young children experience; research on where parents get information and help that suggested the importance of their informal social networks; and efforts by ecologically-oriented child development researchers to understand the ways in which child and family development is influenced by force in the wider environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino and Sherman, 1980).

This evolution can be laid out on a five-point continuum, where each point represents a focus of program attention: (1) child, (2) parents, (3) parent and child, (4) entire family, and (5) family and community. When the goals of the programs in the guide are arranged along this continuum, it is clear that almost fall between two and five. The majority of programs are based on the assumption that increasing parents' competence and self esteem will have a positive effect on children's development. Therefore, it can be argued that some of the parent support programs belong as much at point three as at two because their content is centered on the parents' role in the child's development and on fostering parent-child interaction. Not as many programs involve the entire family (point four); the reasons for this are open to specualtion. The majority of the guide's programs list as one of their goals some form of emphasis on relationships between the family and the community (point five) in the form of networking, either between parents or between parents and other formal and informal sources of support. Some of the implications and problems this evolution has presented for programs are examined below.

Parents and Professionals

One result of the increased emphasis on the parental role has been greater clarification and elaboration of program staff's expectations and assumptions about parents and the relationship between parents and program staff. The following chain of defining assumptions undergirds many of the programs:

Parenting is not completely instinctive;
Parenting is a tough and demanding job;
Parents desire and try to do the best for their children;
Parents want and need support, information and reinforcement in the parenting role;
Parents are also people with their own needs as adults;
Programs should focus on and work with family strengths, not deficits;
Programs should empower families, not create dependence on professionals.

These assumptions are reflective of a subtle but consequential change in the relationship between parents and professionals—a change from efforts to do things to families to an emphasis on doing things with families. Parents are not seen as empty vessels ready to be filled with knowledge about child development, nor is the role of the professional any longer that of the role and dominant authority, but instead that of a partner seeking to enhance child and family development (Weiss, 1979).

Balancing the authority and expertise of parents and program staff to implement a partnership model is not an easily accomplished process. It requires delicate balancing of not easily compatible views. Specifically, parents are seen as in need of assistance, on the one hand, but as "experts" on their children on the other. Program staff are seen as "experts" who have information parents need, but they are to provide it in a nonauthoritarian way which does not encroach on parental expertise. Some of the factors which make the delicate balance of the partnership model possible include the utilization of program staff and volunteers with parenting experience; the blending of paraprofessionals and volunteers along with professionals in service planning and delivery; unrestricted program eligibility; and combinations of program components such as peer support groups and home visits which reinforce parental as well as professional expertise. To the extent that programs are successful in implementing these partnerships based on a non-deficit view of parent, they hold lessons for other types of services intent on strengthening families and minimizing dependence.

Even parents who participate in programs based on a partnership model sometimes are stigmatized by others in the community who believe that anyone who needs to be taught to parent is deficient. As a result, many of those connected with the family support movement argue that one of its top priorities should be to educate the public about the fact that every family can benefit from these programs. Some have gone further to argue that access to preventive family support programs should be a universal entitlement and that this would help reduce any stigma. The issue of whom a program should serve is a controversial one, even in better economic times. Some program directors in fact report intense community and funding pressure to shift from a primary prevention program available to everyone to a more limited clientele of high-risk families.

Family support programs also have had an effect on relationships among program personnel; many are staffed by interdisciplinary teams and include volunteer staff. Most programs with interdisciplinary teams report that the difficulties involved in constituting such teams, understanding one another's professional terminology, and working effectively together are far outweighed by the advantages of different perspectives and approaches to strengthening families. The majority of the programs have volunteer staff, some exclusively so. As such, these programs are practical demonstrations of the varied and significant roles volunteers can play in family support efforts.

The Development of Peer and Informal Supports For Families

Recognition of the importance of informal sources of support from outside the immediate family is evident from the many programs that make some provision for parents to meet, form relationships, and learn from others besides program staff. This blend of formal and informal support is an integral and powerful part of the program's service. Networking or putting parents with similar situations or interest together is accomplished in many ways, such as a parents' corner at a drop-in center, informal time at parent groups, networking evenings, parties and special events, newsletter hook-ups, and provision for meals together.

Some programs report that such networking effort increase the resources parents have to draw on; for example, they get to know one another and begin to exchange services such as babysitting and toys, clothing and equipment. It is not uncommon for programs to report that neighbors met for the first time at a program event. Parents who have met through a program not infrequently continue to get together after their formal program participation ends, so contact with others may enlarge a parent's network with more lasting relationships. Over the long term, if these programs can build enduring links among people, they may have the cumulative effect of strengthening their community's social infrastructure and commitment to families. Many programs have also experienced the power of networks in recuitment; satisfied participants and others knowledgable about the program are often the best recruiters.

Some program directors report that parent groups and networking efforts are not successful with everyone. The value that Americans place on family privacy, independence, and self-sufficiency sometimes conflicts with such efforts. One program director's response to a question about networking represents the experience of several others: "The primary problem we encountered is the cultural values of the parents which oftentimes make them less likely to seek needed help." Others indicate that their work to reach extremely isolated families has been unsuccessful. Informal support networks to some extent require reciprocal exchange. However, several program directors noted that some parents are unable to maintain reciprocal relationships, which inhibits the effectiveness of networking efforts.

Families, Programs, and Communities

Another distinctive feature of the majority of the programs is the effort to coordinate and build links to other service providers in the community. This is done in an effort to link families to services which the program itself cannot provide; to recruit new families through other's referrals; and in an attempt to avoid service duplication. As those familiar with community services are aware, such networking is not always easy. Professional rivalries and turf problems intrude and can take a while to work out.

Reports of program efforts to work with other services also testify to the crucial role other programs and institutions play when a new program is just beginning. In response to survey questions about the major problems and the biggest sources of assistance programs had in getting started, other community services and institutions were frequently noted. Typical responses to the question about the greatest obstacles included: "resistance, fear and territoriality of institutionalized service providers" and "suspicion from other programs about treading on their turf." The majority of the programs worked long and hard on efforts to obtain community support at the outset. As a result many reported that individuals, especially volunteers, and groups and organizations in the community were their greatest sources of initial support. Conducting a careful needs assessment in which many community and organizational representatives participate and creating a program planning board drawn from many sectors, particularly those directly relevant to the program, are two procedures programs frequently recommended to new family support programs.

The bulk of family support programs are grass roots community endeavors, grounded in the needs, resources and circumstances of their local area. One researcher's observation about home and school linkage programs holds across the board: "Each school is unique and therefore successful family support programs need to be etched at the local level" (Kagan, 1983). Whether their funding sources are national, state, or local, programs have been carefully shaped to suit local circumstances. These programs, in turn, must survive at the community level. Recognizing this, program directors emphasize the continual need to inform the public, and particularly community leaders, about the value of the program and its accomplishments. They underscore the importance of developing and maintaining a firm community base of support. This, along with continuous feedback on program operation and effects, helps to ensure program responsiveness, vitality and survival. Survival is a crucial issue for many of the programs; the lack of stable funding is the most frequently cited program concern.

Challenges for the Family Support Movement

Diverse family support programs, united in their commitment to strengthening families, are already having a significant impact on American family life. That impact will grow as older, more established programs share their experience with new ones and as the programs individually and collectively handle three pressing and interrelated challenges involving funding, evaluation and public education.

The first challenge is the achievement of stable financial support. Funding is a problem for all programs, regardless of their size, length of existence, or the diversity of their funding sources. "Most programs are operating out there on a shoestring," Edward Zigler has noted: "everyone wants to get into one of them, but what will happen when they cannot pay the rent?" (1983). Stable funding is difficult to achieve, but it depends at least in part on strong public education efforts that make the case for the benefits of these programs and on accumulating research evidence about program effectiveness.

Public education is also a top priority for family support programs. After observing many interchanges between those knowledgable about these programs and journalists inquiring about them at the recent Yale family support conference, Robert Moroney concluded that programs and their advocates have to "learn to tell their story better" and develop a clear public education strategy (1983). Family support is a complex concept. Its facets have to be explained in such a way that every citizen can understand the benefits of the programs for him or herself and the community. Public education and the development of local, state and national commitment to family support programs are endeavors that are ideally suited to collective action as programs band together to share their experience and secure their future. Public education efforts will also gain in force as programs and evaluators work together to develop better ways to evaluate these complex programs and to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness in both economic and human terms.

The creation and dissemination of adequate program evaluation strategies are two of the greatest challenges facing the family support movement. Evaluation is a central concern because the development of family support programs has by and large outstripped the capacity to evaluate their effectiveness. In the words of a recent National Academy of Sciences Panel convened to address issues in the evaluation of early chilhood intervention programs: "There is an overarching need to test the basic assumptions of these programs: that the most effective way to create and sustain benefits for the child is to improve his or her community environment" (Light and Travers, 1982). The panel concluded that no single study can resolve the issue, only the "gradual accumulation of data on the effects of many such programs" can. Therefore, a key item on the research agenda for those intent on strengthening families is to put tested and refined meat on the bones of family-oriented programs through careful and sensitive program evaluation.

This resource guide was developed in part to take the measure of the growing family support movement. Bernice Weissbourd has argued that it is now a movement that is greater than the sum of its parts (1983). This is the case not least because, at a time when economic and political considerations are forcing policymakers to rethink some of the arrangements of the modern welfare state, the staff of these programs are doing some very creative thinking about how to serve and preserve families. The work of these young programs therefore provides considerable challenge and direction as we rethink social policy for children and families in post industrial society.

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Chairman MILLER. We will grade you later.

Dr. Olson.

STATEMENT OF DAVID H. OLSON, PH.D., PROFESSOR, FAMILY SOCIAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, ST. PAUL, MN

Mr. OLSON. I would like to build on some of the things that previous people have said and simply try to highlight some things that are a little bit different than what other people have commented on.

First of all, I also want to commend you. I think it is somewhat of a miracle today that we even have strong families. You look at the media, the kind of role models we have, you see programs like Dynasty, Dallas, and soap operas. In a sense we rarely see a positive image of families being projected. The exception to that is the Bill Cosby Show where an intact, minority family actually survives and copes with daily problems.

What I would like to do is just talk a little bit about what are strong families and then talk about some of our research.

When we started looking for these families that seem to survive, we look for ones that are able to cope with stress in some effective way, that is, the stress, in many cases, brought the family closer together and made them in a sense work together and deal with things, such that they came out a stronger unit when they were done than when they started.

To do this, the kinds of resources we saw that they relied on, were both internal resources—that is, their communication skills, their ability to negotiate, to say what they think and feel—but also, at times, relying on things external to them. At first, their friends, kin, network, but then community agencies.

The question is: Why should we study these healthy families? And why have we spent time doing this?

Most of the research in the social sciences—I am acquainted with much of the funding from NIMH, NIAAA, and NIDA—is focused on problem families, families which have failed. The problem with most of this research is that we look at families after they have encountered stress, and they haven't been able to resolve the differences and problems. So we never know what these families were like before these events happened. But also we don't know what is it that makes families succeed.

So, one of the studies that we did launch was a study of 1,000 intact families across-the-life cycle. The results of that study—reported in a book, "Families: What Makes Them Work." In that study we looked at young couples that were just married. We looked at couples that had young children, were raising children. We looked at adolescent families. In fact, we included more at the adolescent stage because we predicted and found that the adolescent stage was in fact the most stressful for all families, but also the least satisfying. Levels of satisfaction in the marriage and family life were at its lowest point during adolescence. After the kids left, the satisfaction went up. So that we wanted to concentrate on that stage.

But then we looked at couples after the children had left. Basically what we found—these are intact families—is that the quality of the marriage was much more important than we ever anticipated. We thought it was important, but it came out even more critical as a resource. If the marriage was good, no matter what stressers occurred, internal stressers, daily hassles, external stressers, and accidents, the families that had a good marriage seemed to survive, and do well.

In addition, we found other characteristics. Families that did well had pride in each other. They were proud that they were a family, and they could talk about that. They weren't ashamed to be seen together. In contrast, families that didn't do well, the adolescents never wanted to be seen with their parents.

The other thing is people were able to be close, but also to balance that closeness with independence—that is, they could each do their own thing but they knew they had a home base they could count on.

They were also flexible and creative as a group—that is, when a situation came up, they wouldn't repeat the same patterns that they had tried before that didn't work, but tried something new.

Those, in a sense, were the major characteristics of the families that we found, coped well, across the life cycle.

Another thing, though, that we have tried to do in addition to just studying strong families is to look at families that don't make it in contrast to those strong families.

We followed couples over the first 3 to 5 years of marriage. We had done assessment on these couples 3 to 4 months before marriage. What we wanted to see is how important are the characteristics that these couples had before marriage in predicting what eventually happens to that relationship.

We identified divorce and separate couples and happily married couples. We went back and looked at the kind of relationship they had when they were engaged and ready to be married. We found that in 85 percent of the cases, we could predict what couples fell into the divorce group and what couples fell into the happily married group.

The happily married couples had a relationship where they had better communication skills; they were able to talk about differences; they were more realistic about marriages and the problems marriage is going to have; they had more personality compatibility; and they agreed on religious values.

The fact that this high a number of couples can be identified before marriage, that potentially are going to get divorced surprised us. So we replicated that study recently and found basically the same thing. In other words, we can identify high-risk couples.

Now, what are you going to do with that information? Are you going to share it with the couples? And if you share it, how are they going to use it? What can be done?

The reason I raise this is because I think we are moving in the area of social sciences where we can do more prediction; it raises other issues about how we use that information so it isn't of use. But I think if it is used wisely that we can do much to help many of these couples get their relationship off to a good start, rather than letting them go through the process of getting married, having a poor relationship, having children, getting divorced, and then maybe getting into that cycle again.

Let me just conclude with a couple of recommendations. I think there is enough evidence now regarding what are some important characteristics of strong families and strong relationships. The issue is now, how can this information be used and disseminated and used by couples at all stages of the life cycle so that we don't have to wait until there is a crisis?

I am really convinced more and more that we need to put energy into helping couples get their relationship off to a good start, and then enhance that relationship. That means looking at ways to provide better premarital programs.

In a sense, it is easier to get a marriage license than it is a driver's license in our society, in any State. In any State, you have to demonstrate, first of all, you can read, and write, and know some of the rules to get a driver's license. But you also have to pass a vision test to show that you can see adequately. You also have to demonstrate behind the wheel you can drive, that you have the skills.

We don't require any of these things for marriage. We just assume that people are in love, and because of that, that is sufficient, they are going to make it. And we know that they don't. Half of the couples married today will not make it. And if they are a teenage couple where there is pregnancy, 75 to 85 percent of them won't make it.

The question is: What are we going to do about this? We know in a sense now that they are not going to have a successful relationship. We do know what goes into it, so what can we do to prevent some of these problems from occurring when we now have more evidence about what can be done.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of David Olson follows:]

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA,
FAMILY SOCIAL SCIENCE,
St. Paul, MN, March 6, 1986.

Chairman GEORGE MILLER,
Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, House Office Building, Annex 2, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: I want to thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify before your Select Committee on the topic of "The Diversity and Strength of American Families" which was held on February 25, 1986. I want to commend you and the committee for your genuine interest and concern regarding the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families.

As many of us testified and many on your committee also acknowledged, too much focus in the past has been on problem families and what approaches to treatment can be most effective. Your concern with emphasizing family strengths and prevention programs is in the long run a most positive approach to take for dealing with these problems.

I want to emphasize that there is currently much being done in prevention for children, youth, and families by the Agricultural Extension Service. In addition, the Agricultural Experiment Stations nationally provide funding for programs and research on family strengths. Much of the work by Dr. Stinnett and myself have been funded by these Agricultural Experiment Station grants. I want to emphasize the importance of these studies and services for families because there has been recent discussion from the Reagan administration to cut the funding for Agricultural Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Stations. I believe these groups have made an immense impact on farms and rural America and have done much recently to help farmers cope with financial crises and family stress.

I have provided a slightly revised copy of my testimony Strong Families: A National Resource and a copy of our book entitled "Families: What Makes Them Work" which is the summary of the comprehensive national survey of 1,000 nonclinical families. This survey focused on family strengths across the life cycle and attempted to identify why some families cope better with stress than others.

In closing, I wish you continued success in promoting ideas which will emphazise a more positive focus on families and will support prevention programs which can be most successful to families and our society in the long run.

Sincerely,

DAVID H. OLSON, PH.D., *Professor.*

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID H. OLSON, PH.D., PROFESSOR, FAMILY SOCIAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, ST. PAUL, MN

[NOTE.—Some of the research funded in this study was supported by the Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.]

The purpose of this testimony will focus on some general observations about healthy families, define what we mean by strong families, and describe the diversity of family structure and patterns represented by strong families. I will discuss the value of studying strong families and briefly summarize what we have learned. Lastly, I will make a few recommendations regarding future needs and resources that are needed to build on our knowledge and to strengthen family life in the United States.

It is somewhat of a miracle today that strong families still exist in our society. This is because they receive little positive attention in the media or support from our society. Consequently, most of our role models about family life are negative, such as those projected in television families like Dallas, Dynasty, and in most soap operas. The media's presentation often represents families as conflicted, troubled, and generally abusive. Only recently has a television show, The Bill Cosby Show, represented an intact minority family that has some real strengths and viability. From what we see in the media, we could conclude much like Rodney Dangerfield does that: "the family doesn't get much respect." In fact, strong families are taken for granted and rarely receive the praise and recognition they deserve.

When we define the family in our culture, we should be aware of the diversity of structure and types of families today. We know that the traditional definition of the family with a male breadwinner, female homemaker and two to three children represents only about 25 percent of the families in our culture. Dual career and dual working couples represent another 30 percent. Over 20 percent of the families today are blended where one or both parents have already been married and bring together children from their previous relationships. Single parent families represents almost 25 percent of the current population of families today, and nearly 90 percent of these families are female headed households.

WHAT ARE STRONG FAMILIES

In order to identify strong families, we as family professionals have established some criteria for selecting these families. The following are some of the specific criteria that appear to be important in evaluating a strong family.

First, family members should be able to cope with stress and problems in an efficient and effective way. This means being able to handle the daily hassles and events that come along but also be able to handle the more typical stressors that occur across the life cycle. This includes adjusting to the birth of a child, dealing with the rebellion of an adolescent, and adapting to the changing roles of a mother as she moves from homemaker to the work place. It also means being able to deal with non-normative events such as illnesses or injuries which often have an immense impact on a family system.

Second, a strong family needs to have and use coping resources from both from within and from outside the family. The internal resources include skills in communicating, negotiating, resolving problems and differences. Families also need to be able to rely on external resources such as their social network which includes their friends and kin. At times, they might also need to rely on more broadly based community resources such as counseling centers, churches, and other helping agencies.

Third, strong families have the ability to end up being more cohesive, more flexible and more satisfied as a result of effectively overcoming stress and problems. In other words, stress can have a positive impact on a strong family. On the other hand, stress will tend to immobilize other families and create even more distress.

WHY STUDY HEALTHY FAMILIES

Unfortunately, we know more about what makes families fail than we do about what makes them strong and viable. This is because most of the federal funding for research has been with dysfunctional and problem families. In much of this past research, an attempt has been to identify the various family dynamics and family structures that help to explain emotional and physical symptoms. This research has often been lacking theoretically and empirically because it studied families after problems occurred. Therefore, the studies have not helped us understand what caused the dysfunction, it only helped us understand what families are like after the destructive patterns and crises have impacted the family.

This is not to say that the focus on problem families has been totally unproductive. In fact, a recent longitudinal study we completed compared couples who were separated and divorced two to three years after marriage with couples where both spouses were very happily married (Fowers and Olson, 1986). All of these couples had taken a premarital inventory called PREPARE three to four months before marriage in order to help them identify their relationship strengths as a couple but also their work areas and issues.

The study attempted to investigate how accurately it would be possible to predict whether a couple ended up happily married or divorced based on kind of relationship they had before marriage. Surprisingly, it was found that it was possible to accurately predict in about 85 percent of the cases those couples that eventually became separated and divorced. In other words, these high risk couples already had relationship problems that were apparent before marriage. Because these couples had few strengths, their relationship simply continued to deteriorate and they eventually ended up getting divorced.

In contrasting the happily married couples with the divorced and separated couples, we found that the happily married couples had relationship strengths in the following areas: ability to communicate, ability to resolve conflicts, more realistic about marriage, had personality compatibility and agreed on their religious values.

This study has since been replicated by Larsen (1986) and an additional factor that was found to be more important in the latter study was the equal sharing of roles. Otherwise, the results from the two studies are quite compatible.

NATIONAL SURVEY OF 1,000 STRONG FAMILIES

A comprehensive study was completed by D. Olson, H. McCubbin and colleagues which focused on a national survey of 1,000 non-clinical and intact families from across the country. The results from this survey are published in the book, Families: What Makes Them Work. The sample of intact families represents various stages of the family life cycle including newlyweds, childbearing and child-rearing couples, families with adolescents, families who are launching adolescents, and couples in the empty nest and retirement stages.

One purpose of the study was to see how satisfied family members were with various components of their family life. This survey clearly showed results that were very similar to a Gallup Poll which was taken about the same time. The results indicated that 70-75 percent of the family members were very satisfied with their marriage, with their children and their overall family life.

A major purpose of this study was to identify what are some of the stressors and problems that families encounter across the life cycle. In addition, we wanted to examine why some families are able to cope much better with the stressors than other families. We wanted to identify the salient characteristics of these strong families so that we can better understand what made them more able to cope and deal effectively with the problems that all families seem to encounter.

The results of the analysis clearly demonstrated eight major strengths of families that seem to help them cope more effectively with stress. Families having these characteristics we consider strong families.

1. *Couple Relationship.*—Parents have a strong and happy marriage.
2. *Cohesion.*—Family members feel close to each other but also allow each other privacy and freedom to act independently.
3. *Change.*—Family members are flexible, creative as a group, and able to solve problems together.
4. *Communication.*—Family members are able to listen and share both negative and positive feelings with each other.
5. *Coping with Stress.*—Family members are able to effectively cope with stress.

These major dimensions have been found repeatedly in our work in the studies of other investigators who have examined strong families. These include studies by Nick Stinnett and John DeFrain who have recently written a book entitled Secrets of Strong Families. It also includes the work of Jerry Lewis and Robert Beavers who have also identified strengths of healthy families.

STRONG FAMILIES AS A NATIONAL RESOURCE

Problems either begin or end up in families. While the family can be an important causal factor in creating problems, it can also be a very important curative factor. Unfortunately, we have taken the family for granted and have not given it the recognition or support which it needs.

There is increasing evidence that families can either greatly facilitate or disrupt the recovery process from all types of emotional and physical problems. The problems can range from child abuse to drug abuse, from sexual abuse to physical abuse. It can include emotional problems like depression and suicide and physical symptoms like headaches, backaches, stomachaches, and even more serious medical problems like heart disease and cancer.

The family is a critical resource in that it is a personal refuge and caretaker of people. The home is where you can be yourself, feel most comfortable and can recover and become rejuvenated. This home base provides a grounding and security which we need to face the challenges and stressors of daily life. If the family doesn't perform these functions adequately, then other agencies must step in and pick up the problem cases.

What we see all too often is that problem families produce more problem families. Unless resolved, family problems often repeat themselves and even become more intense. For example, in a recent study of sex offenders by Carnes (1986), he found that the family of origin of many of these people were disturbed and that they themselves had been abused in some way. What happened is that not only did these children learn these dysfunctional patterns but they carried them on in a more abusive and extreme way in their future relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Research should be directed to discover how family strengths can be applied to other families so that they can more adequately cope and deal with problems across the life cycle.

2. Programs need to be developed and supported that will enhance couple and family strengths. While there has been a lay movement that has promoted marriage enrichment, these programs often do too little too late. The programs are often weekends and do not focus on giving the couples additional skills for improving their relationship. Very little effective programming is being done with families. Even though there is increasing evidence that families at the childbearing and adolescent stages encounter the most stress and the least level of satisfaction, few programs are available for them unless they reach a crisis.

3. Much more work needs to be done is to help couples get their relationship off to a good start before marriage. With the current divorce rate of 50 percent, marriage has in a sense become too easy to initiate or terminate. In fact, it is easier to get a marriage license than it is to get a driver's license. We also know that certain couples below the ages of 18 that have dropped out of high school and where there is a premarital pregnancy have as high a rate of divorce as 75–80 percent after five years of marriage.

Based on our study of divorce, it is increasingly evident that it is possible to identify high risk couples before marriage. These couples could benefit from a more effective premarital programs to help them delay or even decide not to marry.

It is one thing to find a good relationship. It is another to learn how to maintain and enhance the strengths in an ongoing relationship. Too often, people have not gone for treatment of marital problems until issues are so severe that they conclude that the best solution is divorce. Unfortunately, too many of these people move from one relationship to another without learning from past experience.

4. Yearly checkups and prevention programs should be offered to all couples and families. Whereas semi-annual dental checkups and yearly physical exams have become more accepted in our society, we still greatly resist the idea of any type of checkup for our relationships. Yet we know that most relationships do have problems and couples do benefit from receiving constructive feedback on what are current issues and possible ways of resolving differences.

These prevention programs could do much to build on the knowledge we have regarding family strengths and could help couples continue to build their relationship in a positive and constructive manner. In this way, we can help families build on their own strengths and make them a more viable national resource for both their own families but also for our entire society.

5. A family impact statement should be developed for all legislative programs and policies proposed by agencies and state and federal government. These statements would give increasing visibility to the significance of the family and to its impact on all other aspects of society.

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Chairman MILLER. Dr. Minuchin.

STATEMENT OF SALVADOR MINUCHIN, M.D., RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, NY, AND CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Dr. MINUCHIN. Mr. Levin said before that we bring our ideologies, and then we piggyback facts on our ideologies.

In 1965, I was working in the city of New York with juvenile delinquents. The position of the courts then with juvenile delinquents was that you take them away from the family; you put them in institutions; you keep them 1 or 2 years in institutions; you clean their psyche; you send them back to Harlem again.

I came back 2 years ago to New York City. The same procedure exists, exactly like 35 years ago.

In 1979, the Child Welfare Act said that agencies that work with families should develop services that are oriented toward families. This was 7 years ago. There is really no change in the service delivery to families after 7 years, except probably there was a change in the way in which the agencies arrange the files on their client.

When I was working as a reviewer for NIMH, there was a tremendous amount of funding for very good programs. These programs produced a tremendous amount of very good data, and they remain in some files at NIMH. The issue is how we use data.

Talking as a psychiatrist, I will say that the way in which services are organized for social workers, for psychiatrists, and other professionals in the mental area is very much oriented toward saving and protecting the individual. I think that is true for the judicial system. I think that is true for many of the organizations that we are talking about now that should be protecting the family.

For example, I have been very interested in working with family violence. It is an area in which the mental health system and the judicial system are together. But they are not together as cochairmen. The judicial system has organized the thinking of the mental health system in such a way that it is almost impossible to approach violence in the family in a helpful way.

We all have a very important set of rhetoric about the family, but our institutions are not protecting families. The institutions instead do violence to families.

We can talk a tremendous amount here about very significant ideas. But these institutions do exist and these institutions maintain the individual way in which we deliver services.

That is all I want to say.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Salvador Minuchin, M.D., follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SALVADOR MINUCHIN, M.D., CHILD PSYCHIATRIST AND FAMILY THERAPIST, NEW YORK, NY

I am a child psychiatrist, and a family therapist. That means that I work with something so familiar to us all that we rarely even experience it: the family.

About thirty years ago a group of psychotherapists began to challenge the mental health professions' tenet that the life of the individual is a purely internal matter. We began seeing the individual quite literally in his family, bringing the family itself into the therapy room, so that some of the individual's most significant people were there in the flesh, instead of only as introjects. During these thirty years I worked with a variety of families, as a therapist and researcher. I want to talk briefly today about my experience in three areas: families and medicine, families with different organizations, and the problem of violence in families.

I like to start with families and medicine because a project I directed clinically documented the way families affect family members. This research, a study of childhood psychosomatic illness, began when we found that therapeutic interventions that changed family members' ways of interacting with a labile diabetic child changed the child's medical profile. One child in the program had averaged one hospitalization for diabetic acidosis and impending coma every three weeks for two years despite optimal medical management plus weekly sessions with a psychiatrist. After several months of family therapy had made major changes in the child's family, her pattern of hospitalizations was broken. In a nine year follow up, the girl required no further hospitalizations for inexplicable ketoacidosis.

"To validate our observations clinically, we devised a study that utilized a biochemical indicator of emotional arousal: the level of free fatty acids in the blood. During a structured interview that elicited family conflict, blood samples were drawn from each family member for later analysis. The correlation of free fatty acid levels in the samples with the events of the interview demonstrated that behavioral events among family members can be measured in family members' blood" (S. Minuchin, Psychosomatic Families. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

This context of our lives that we all take so much for granted, is an extraordinary entity. And it has extraordinary possibilities in the making of social policy.

Today I am working with families of cancer victims. When one family member is affected by a major trauma like cancer, the family is in crisis. And the family's response can affect the course of the illness. At New York University there is a cooperative care facility which requires that every patient who comes into the unit have a "care partner." This modality of hospitalization, which recognizes that illness is a family affair and includes the family in patient care, is not only demonstrably helpful to both the patient and the family, it is roughly one third cheaper than the cost of hospitalizing a patient alone. Nonetheless, only two programs of this type exist in the United States.

The cross fertilization of family therapy and medicine has been instrumental in the development of family pediatrics and family medicine, both seeing that medical illness affects the whole family, and that interventions at the family level can produce change in the medical profile. Today with medicine's spiraling costs, we could be exploring the possibility of preventive services and the other advantages a family orientation suggests. But implementation would require the development of supportive structures for home care that do not at present exist.

The second topic I want to discuss briefly is the question of family forms, and their variety. There is a lot of rhetoric fashionable now about the need to defend the American family. But the "American family" we dedicate ourselves to protecting is a myth, as any sociologist or demographer can easily demonstrate. If it actually was the American family of the 19th century, when most of our current structures were developed, it is not the American family of 1986. Yet we persist in calling the myth the ideal, and labeling all other forms as deviant. With one in every two marriages ending in divorce, divorce can scarcely be considered deviant. Yet we insist on labeling it a failure, and focusing on the pain of the "broken home." Single parent families, which used to be considered a deviant phenomenon of the lower socioeconomic classes, now cut across all social strata. They should be considered one important, major family form of today's world, requiring a society that pays attention to the changes that are occurring in family shapes. The same is true of the "blended" family.

"An historial and contextual perception of family change would do much to lessen the hysteria of concern over the current health of the American family. For example, consider the British family of two centuries ago. According to the sociologist Lawrence Stone, this would not have been the nuclear unit, but the kin unit (the open lineage system). Stone points out that, well into the seventeenth century, marriage was largely an arrangement for the combination of properties and the continuation of family lines. The rearing of the children born to the union and the mutual support of the spouses—two of the tasks we consider to be primary functions of the nuclear family unit—were much more the business of the kin system. Relatively little importance was attached to the spouse unit. If a husband and wife grew to care for each other, there was certainly no harm done, but if mutual affection did not develop, no one considered the marriage a failure on that account. Children were commonly reared away from their parents, by wet nurses. The mortality rate was high, particularly for children, and medieval parents often gave several of their children the same name, in the hope that at least one might live to bear it into adulthood. Until the level of infant and child mortality began to decline toward the beginning of the modern age, it was simply not safe to love a baby or any individual. The family was impermanent.

"With the Industrial Revolution came improved hygiene and medical care; spouses and children could survive longer. English society began to change, and so did family norms. By the mid-eighteenth century the nuclear family was the accepted ideal of the middle classes. Then for the first time the interdependence of the spouses and the rearing of children became major tasks for the nuclear unit. Stone estimates that this change in family norm took about two hundred years. In our own time family change—like everything else—is happening faster" (S. Minuchin, Family Kaleidoscope. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984).

Working with many different families over the years has taught me that families have many possible shapes. The fact that some are different doesn't mean that they are better or worse, just that they are different. But in social policy, and even in the delivery of our mental health services, we insist on seeing one possibility as the norm, and all others as deviant. For years we have blinded ourselves to the strengths of the extended family, insisting on cracking the nuclear unit away from a structure that is the norm in many cultures, including many of our own ethnic cultures. Some sociologists have pointed out the extended family's value as a source of support for adults who might be impossibly overburdened if the nuclear unit were split off. But little in our policy recognizes this source of support. We are also missing the possibilities of a new form, the horizontal extended family. As a family therapist I often find myself in my office with two or three family units, connected vertically, by generational ties, and horizontally, by remarriage, with grandparents, parents, inlaws, former inlaws, siblings and stepsiblings all very much involved in the problems of the family member originally presented as "the patient." Becuase my experience in family psychiatry has given me an acceptance of varying family shapes along with a deep respect for families' ability to support and nurture, I accept the divorced family as a viable family organization, one of many possibilities that our culture has institutionalized. It is a pity that our institutions have not yet managed this transition. We need to explore separation and divorce so as to develop ways of helping family members move from one pattern to another, instead of automatically labeling the situation deviant. With our current lack of knowledge, we are in grave danger of misdiagnosing the search for new patterns, and the pain that inevitably ensues, as pathological, rather than transitional, and I think this frequently happens. As a society we have grown accustomed to a telephone answering machine message that says "You may leave a message for Phil Smith, Carolyn Jones-Smith, Billy Smith and Cassie Jones." Our schools, hospitals, correctional agencies, and mental health systems should also orient themselves to the late 20th century, instead of clinging to their blinders.

I want to close by bringing up one more issue, the critical question of violence in families, because here again we are handicapping ourselves by not applying what we know. During the 1960's I was working with what were sometimes called "impossible" families—hard core, poverty stricken families with delinquent children. We knew that many families do cope with the problems of poverty, managing to raise their children under the most difficult conditions.

"Across and within cultures, across and within socioeconomic levels, diverse natural experiments in family forms all manage somehow to salvage, if not enhance, what is uniquely flexible, purposeful, and human. Versions of the sound and functioning person are constantly fashioned even within the confining possibilities of dire poverty. Even here capable forms of the family emerge, providing as yet unstudied models of mental health which cope quite effectively with the world of the poor" (S. Minuchin, Families of the Slums. New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1967).

But today these natural models of mental health remain unstudied. Knowledge of their existence and efficacy remains unreflected in our social policy.

The juvenile court's response to the delinquent child in those days was to remove him from the family and culture of the streets, returning him some time later to those unchanged contexts. Thirty years later the situation remains the same. A similar situation exists in regard to family violence. Our society has two responses to violence within the family: ignore it, or control it. The first rarely works—it's not a problem that goes away. The second works, but only sometimes, and in some circumstances. It seems there is a violence which the sociologist Emanuel Marx calls coercive violence. This is a deliberate use of force in pursuit of a goal: a parent hits a child so she'll stop stealing, and she does. But not all violence is goal directed. It is quite common, especially in families, to find a violence that is a response to helplessness. In these cases, the victimizer feels victimized himself. The use of force is somehow a way of saying, "look what you make me do." In such a situation, control, blindly imposed on family violence, produces only more violence.

This is a problem which our judicial and mental health systems, in their new, and correct, focus on the problems of family violence, cannot reduce to operational terms because of our blinders. We still operate with linear, or unidirectional, ideas of cause, agent, and consequence. We tend to zero in on one and only one question: who is responsible, and how should he be punished? We badly need to broaden our focus, and look at a wider picture, not to deny the responsibility of the victimizer or blame the victim, but to improve our methods of intervening. There is little satisfaction in fixing the blame for family violence, or even punishing its perpetrator, when using the tools we have might have prevented it.

I want to include under the rubric of family violence something that is not usually seen in this category—the way institutions designed to help the family do violence to the family. A clear example of this is the workings of the foster care system, which removes children from their families for their own protection, without studying the destructive consequences of this intervention. Children in the foster care system tend to be kept in the foster care system, even if the original cause for placement was a fire that burned their family out of its apartment. Little attempt is made to help the biological family stay together or reunite.

"In 1970, 3.8 per 1000 children in the United States were placed in foster care. Many studies documented the harm being done—establishing the following facts.

"(1) Little effort is made to avoid placement. Alan Gruber's study of foster care in Massachusetts reports that 93 percent of the natural families interviewed felt that no strategies to keep their children at home had been considered by agencies prior to placement. In many cases a specific crisis precipitated foster care; the families reported they had been unable to receive assistance until the crisis was upon them and placement was pending.

"(2) Once the child leaves the natural family, little is done to return him or her to the family.

"(3) During placement, the contact between children and their natural parents is minimal.

"(4) Once a child is placed in a foster home, the likelihood of return to the natural family decreases in proportion to the length of time away. Yet there is little long range planning. Gruber reported that in Massachusetts 83 percent of the children were never returned to their natural family even for a trial period" (S. Minuchin, Family Kaleidoscope. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984).

It is unfortunately not uncommon for a child to be bounced from foster family to foster family for a period of years, until he reaches the age of 18, at which point all service abruptly ends—at least until he comes to the attention of the welfare system or the courts. We could open avenues that are less traumatic for the child and the family, produce more effective results, and in the end prove less financially burdensome if, instead of looking only at the family's destructive effects on the child, we also consider its capacity to grow, change, and heal.

We are thinking too narrowly. In a world of computers, we are proceeding with paper and pencil, still working with concepts and institutions dedicated to responding to the needs of a society that isn't there any more. Looking at the family as a social system embedded in other social systems will give us much better ways of understanding ourselves in our world.

Chairman MILLER. Dr. Carlson.

STATEMENT OF ALLAN C. CARLSON, PH.D., EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE, ROCKFORD, IL

Mr. CARLSON. Thank you.

This committee deserves to be commended for holding hearings on the strengths of successful families. Because of the more common, although understandable, focus on families in difficulty or need, these positive models of family vitality are too often forgotten.

I was asked today to comment on the policy implications of the recent research on family strengths, specifically the work of Doctors Stinnett, DeFrain, and Olson. In responding to this request, I would like to begin with a few general observations and then turn to some more specific policy ideas.

In their intriguing study of family strengths, Doctors Stinnett and DeFrain have identified six qualities common to strong families which have been previously summarized. From these findings I see two implications. First, the Federal Government should respect the most efficient family structure for delivering those qualities: the intact two-parent family, which I would hold up as a model of family health.

There is no question that some single parents, as example, can provide strong homes for their children, and I applaud those who so succeed.

Yet, both common sense and social research tell us that two-parent, husband-wife families are—all other things equal—better able to provide a strong homelife for their children and happiness and reinforcement for each other.

Empirical studies affirm these results. To choose but one current public issue—youth suicide—recent research indicates that the highest youth suicide rate is found among families with divorced or unmarried parents; the lowest rate is found among intact families.

To choose another matter of current policy interest, new research on child abuse shows that a child reared within a home with a stepparent is 40 times more likely to become an abuse statistic than as a similarly age child living with two natural parents.

Such findings support the contention that Federal policy measures, as a minimum, should not penalize marriage and childbearing within wedlock nor reward illegitimacy, desertion, or divorce.

Yet, it is possible to point to specific policies which have violated each of these dictums.

Second, the Federal Government must not interfere with the free exercise of the social function of religion. A clear implication of the Stinnett work is that religious faith—or spirituality—is of great importance to effective family functioning. This finding is confirmed by other social research.

For example, in a recent article, sociologist Stephen Stack concludes that the institutions of family and religion are symbiotically related—they change together over time. As religion declines, he says, so will families: as religion strengthens, so will families.

Now, governments cannot, of course, do anything to strengthen religions. Yet governments can be, and at times they have been, hostile to the public role and importance of churches, synagogues, and temples.

Dr. Olson's research also suggests a number of policy-relevant conclusions. I note here that I am speaking for myself, not for him. First, he shows that families face the greatest stress and function the least effectively during periods when children are present, particularly adolescent children, or when they are leaving the home.

Second, he shows that strong families confront periods of stress primarily by calling on internal resources: they resolve their problems privately, so to speak.

Third, among the many attributes of strong families which he cites, most are matters over which the Federal Government neither has nor should have influence, for example, personality habits, marital sexual relationships, leisure activities, or household roles.

There is, however, one recurring variable affecting family effectiveness—namely, finances or household income and its management—where the Federal Government already does play a direct role, through both its taxation and welfare policies.

These general observations, I believe, can be translated into specific measures which would redirect Federal policy so as to encourage a greater number of strong families.

First, tax policy. Over the last 25 years, we have witnessed a transfer of the relative Federal tax burden from corporations and persons without dependents onto the backs of parents trying to rear children. It has already been noted, for example, that the erosion of the real value of the personal exemption, tied to other policy changes, increased the average tax rate of a family with four children by over 200 percent between 1960 and the early 1980's. This contrasts to couples without children or single persons who witnessed minimal or no increase in their average tax rates.

The Social Security or payroll tax has risen from less than 2 percent of wages in the midsixties to 7.15 percent today for employed persons, and 12.3 percent for the self-employed. As a regressive tax, FICA falls heaviest on persons in the middle- and low-middle-income ranges, precisely where young Americans of childbearing age are disproportionately concentrated.

Since 1976, the child care tax credit has provided meaningful tax relief, without income ceiling, to working parents who place their preschoolers in day care. Yet, roughly half of American families with preschoolers arrange to provide full-time parental care for their own small children, often at considerable financial and personal sacrifice. The Federal Government offers these parents no similar relief.

Through such policies, the Government has significantly added to the financial pressures on new families, and has made the creation of families more difficult. There are tax policy changes, though, which would reduce the negative pressures without drawing the Government further into family life and decisionmaking.

For example, the personal exemption for children only could be raised from the current $1,040 up to $4,000.

The earned income credit could be transformed into a universal program, without income ceiling, granting the taxpayer a $500 refundable credit for each dependent child, up to the taxpayer's total FICA contribution. For low-income working parents, the maximum total credit could also be applied against the employer's FICA contribution.

The maximum child care credit could be extended to parents who arrange for the personal care of their own preschoolers.

Turning now to welfare policy, the general implications noted earlier suggest to me that "workfare" for the mothers of preschoolers is an inappropriate measure. They also suggest that welfare benefits should not discourage individual effort, work, or marriage. Within these somewhat contradictory constraints, I am drawn to a plan put forward by Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute. He suggests consolidating AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid into a more coherent income transfer program, with such Federal aid to be channeled through local government agencies, private charities, and churches: Institutions which can more readily tailor other support services to individual circumstances.

In a broader sense, I should note my disagreement with Professor Hareven's earlier point, that the problem is the United States' incomplete welfare state; that is, that our welfare state is not large enough. Now, that view is simply not supported by the evidence.

In Sweden, for example, we find perhaps the world's most complete welfare state. We also see there an accelerating breakdown of marriage and family life. Since 1965, the Swedish marriage rate has fallen to the lowest level in the Western World, a 50 percent decline.

The rate of out-of-wedlock pregnancy in Sweden has climbed 300 percent since that time.

We have also seen a dramatic increase in the number of young Swedes who are rejecting marriage and children altogether.

So a complete welfare state—a massive increase in the amount of welfare funding—is at least not the complete answer. In fact, some evidence might suggest that it could aggravate the problem.

Finally, let me draw a conclusion relative to church and state. To the degree constitutionally possible, I believe that education within a religious context should be encouraged. Promising ideas here include the use of vouchers in existing federally funded educational programs, including the current proposal to "voucherize" title I.

In conclusion, let me note that the Federal Government cannot create strong families. Active Federal intervention into family life, even if benevolently motivated, can be expected to have negative effects.

The best approach for the Government to adopt is to let families keep more of their privately earned income, to channel necessary welfare programs through people-oriented local agencies, and to let spiritual institutions blossom within our Republic.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Allan C. Carlson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALLAN C. CARLSON, PH.D., EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE

This committee deserves commendation for holding hearings on the strengths of successful families. Because of the more common, although understandable, focus on families in difficulty or need, these positive models of family vitality are too often forgotten.

By way of personal background, I should note that I serve as Executive Vice President of The Rockford Institute, a non-profit research center in Illinois which, among other purposes focuses on the place of the family in American society. My own doctoral studies were in the fields of modern social and economic history, where I concentrated on the formulation of family policies in Sweden and other Western European countries during the 1920's and '30's. I have since written a number of commentaries on trends in American family life and their relationship to government.

I have been asked to comment on the policy implications of the findings of Drs. Stinnett, DeFrain, and Olson. In responding to this request, I will begin by making several general observations and then turn to more specific policy ideas.

In their intriguing study of family strengths, Drs. Stinnett and DeFrain have identified six qualities common to strong families: (a) a shared commitment to the welfare and happiness of family members; (b) an appreciation for each other; (c) the spending of time together; (d) good communication patterns; (e) a strong spiritual, or religious, orientation; and (f), an ability to cope or deal with crises in a positive manner. In these findings and the explanations which accompany them, I see two implications:

First, the Federal government should recognize and respect the most efficient family structure for delivering those qualities: the intact two-parent family. There is no question that some single-parents, as example, can provide strong homes for their children, and I applaud those who so succeed. Yet both common sense and social research tell us that two-parent, husband-wife families are—all other things being equal—better able to provide a strong home life for their children and happiness and reinforcement for each other. It is obvious, for example, that two parents are better equipped to give time to or listen to their children than is the single parent.

Empirical studies show the same results. To chose but one current public issue, recent research indicates that the highest youth suicide rate is found among families with divorced or unmarried parents; the lowest rate is found among intact families.[1] Data from the World Health Organization shows that women with children are "substantially less likely to commit suicide" than their childless counterparts and that higher levels of divorce result in higher suicide rates.[2] To choose another matter of current policy interest, new research on child abuse shows that a child reared within a home with a step-parent is 40 times more likely to become an abuse stastistic than is a similarly-aged child living with two natural parents.[3]

Such findings support the contention that federal policy measures, as a minimum, should not penalize marriage and child-bearing-in-wedlock nor reward illegitimacy, desertion, or divorce.

Second, the Federal government must not interfere with the free exercise of the social function of religion. A clear implication of the Stinnett-DeFrain work is that religious faith—or spirituality—is of great importance to effective family functioning. This finding is confirmed by other social research. In the May 1985 issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family*, for example, sociologist Stephen Stack concludes that the institutions of family and religion re symbiotically related and change together over time. Indeed, he suggests that religion and family "may represent the same set of collectivistic values," namely self-sacrifice, duty, obligation, and caring for others. As religion declines, he says, so will families; as religion strengthens, so will families.[4] Governments cannot, of course, do anything to strengthen religions. Yet they can be, and at times have been hostile to the public role and importance of churches, synogogues, and temples.

Dr. Olson's research also suggests a number of policy-relevant conclusions. First, he shows that families face the greatest stress and function the least effectively during periods when children are present, particularly adolescent children.

Second, he shows that strong families confront periods of stress primarily by calling on internal resources: they resolve their problems privately, so to speak.

And third, among the many attributes of strong families which he cites, most are matters over which the Federal government neither has nor should have influence (e.g., personality habits, marital sexual relationships, leisure activities, and household roles). There is, however, one recurring variable affecting family effectiveness—namely finances or household income and its management—where the Federal government does play a direct role, through both taxation and welfare policies.

These general conclusions, I believe, can be translated into specific measures which would redirect federal policy so as to encourage a greater number of strong families.

TAX POLICY

Over the last twenty-five years, we have witnessed a transfer of the relative federal tax burden from corporations and persons without dependents onto the backs of parents trying to rear children. It is now generally known, for example, that the erosion of the real value of the personal exemption, tied to other policy changes, increased the average tax rate of a family with four children by over 200% between 1960 and the early 1980's. In contrast, couples without children and single persons witnessed minimal or no change in their average tax rates.

The Social Security or payroll tax has risen from less than 2% of wages in the mid-1960's to 7.15% today for employed persons, and 12.3% for the self-employed. As a regressive tax, FICA falls heaviest on persons in the middle and low-middle income ranges, precisely where young Americans of child-bearing age are disproportionately concentrated.

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[1] Friedrich V. Wenz, "Social Areas and Durkheim's theory of Suicide," *Psychological Reports* 38 (1976): 1313-14.

[2] Nick Danigelis and Whitney Pope, "Durkheim's Theory of Suicide as Applied to the Family: An Empirical Test," *Social Forces* 57 (1979): 1081-1106.

[3] Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, "Child Abuse and Other Risks of Not Living With Both Parents," *Journal of Ethology and Sociobiology* 6 (1985): 197-210.

[4] Steven Stack, "The Effect of Domestic/Religious Individualism on Suicide, 1954-1978," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 45 (1985): 431-47.

Since 1976, the child-care tax credit has provided meaningful tax relief, without income ceiling, to working parents who place their preschoolers in day care. Yet roughly half of American families with preschoolers arrange to provide full time parental care for their own small children, often at considerable financial and personal sacrifice. The Federal government offers these parents no similar relief.

Through such policies, the Federal government has significantly added to the financial pressures on young families, and has made the creation of new families moire difficult. There are tax policy changes, though, which would reduce the negative pressures without drawing the government further into family life and decision-making.

For example, the personal exemption for children only could be raised from the current $1,040 to $4,000.

The Earned Income Credit could be transformed into a universal program, without income ceiling, granting the taxpayer a $500 refundable credit for each dependent child, up to the taxpayer's total FICA contribution. For low-income working parents, the maximum total credit could also be applied against the employer's FICA contribution.

The maximum child-care tax credit could be extended to parents which arrange for the personal care of their own preschoolers.

WELFARE POLICY

The general implications noted earlier suggest that "workfare" for the mothers of preschoolers is an inappropriate measure. They also suggest that welfare benefits should not discourage individual effort, work, or marriage. Within these constraints, I am drawn to a plan put forward by Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute. He suggests consolidating AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid into a more coherent income transfer program, with such Federal aid to be channeled through local government agencies, private charities, and churches: institutions which can more readily tailor support services to individual circumstances.

CHURCH AND STATE

To the degree Constitutionally possible, education within a religious context should be encouraged. Promising ideas in this regard include the use of vouchers in existing federally funded educational programs, including the current proposal to "voucherize" Title I.

In conclusion, let me note that the Federal government cannot create strong families. Active Federal intervention into family life, even if benevolently motivated, can be expected to have negative effects. The best approach for the government to adopt is to let families keep more of their privately earned income, to channel necessary welfare programs through people-oriented local agencies, and to let spiritual institutions blossom within our Republic.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

There are various lists regarding the characteristics of healthy families—and I don't know if you need 4 out of 7, or 7 out of 10, or 10 out of 10, to make it. Obviously, there are a number of things on the lists that strike home, whether it is good communication, or income, whatever it is.

In chairing this committee, to keep your sanity, you also construct certain models. One of the models that I have constructed in terms of the investigations of this committee, is that in fact in dealing with children and families there is an awful lot more opportunity out there for success than we are gaining.

It seems to me as you talk to married couples, and the couples in various states of marriage, the one characteristic of success that comes forward a lot is communications. And what you find out is after some intensive, and maybe comprehensive, counseling, a lot of times communications improve.

Now, I just wondered to what extent a lot of these healthy characteristics are dormant and can be brought out by the extension of services. And the two words that always come to mind to me are comprehensive and intensive—and the minute you say those two words you almost rule out most of what we are doing, because comprehensive and intensive services are extended to very few people in this country, whether it is health care or almost any service—whether it is from the Federal Government or from the church, it doesn't make a great deal of difference.

I just wonder if whether or not it is valid to think in terms of the opportunities for success and the extent that they are. Let me start with you, Dr. Minuchin. You point out in your testimony and in some of your earlier works, that you have dealt with the disposables, the families with very serious problems.

I have had that experience, members of my family working with some of those kinds of families on the West Coast. And every now and then you are able to retrieve one. But it is expensive, it is long, it is hard, it is difficult. But if that is the hardest case—if those were the families that for some reason everybody else gave up on, how do we work our way back up the gradient in terms of finding those opportunities for success out there among other families?

Dr. MINUCHIN. Let me first say that 2 years ago, I began to interview normal families.

Chairman MILLER. You found one? You found a normal family?

Dr. MINUCHIN. That is exactly the answer that I wanted.

Chairman MILLER. I was worried about the criteria.

Dr. MINUCHIN. Yes, how did I define normal families? They were families that were not in contact with social workers or psychiatrists, or any such people. The family members would invariably say, why did you select us?

I have asked large audiences for a show of hands—"how many of you come from normal families?" And there are a few timid hands. That is a strange idea of what normal is. A lot of the variables that supposedly define normal families make me really uncomfortable. I am very optimistic about the American family, quite different than all the pessimistic views, because I think that I see the American family as a family that is historically in evolution. It changes, rearranges, and develops alternatives, and grows.

In my private practice, I see only families. I have seen poor, very disorganized families, and families of chairmen of departments of psychiatry. So I have the whole range. I find that it is as easy, or as difficult, to work with the family of a psychiatrist as with the families that I saw in Harlem.

The difference, of course, is all the things that happen around the family. But I find that in my work with families, I always have a sense that one can access alternatives that provide the potential for change, for growth, for possibilities. I think that in general the mental health professions and the people that help people handicap the possibility of alternatives. Let me give you an example. I have gone to agencies that work with older people. I said, I will try to help you work with the family so that the family members are able to help these older people.

The agency said to me no. Our commitment is to a program for the old person. There is something about the mental health profession and the moneys that support the mental health professions that do not support the possibility of working with families. Everything is oriented to supporting work with individuals.

I am working now with families at New York University Medical Center where there is a program called the Co-op Care. In order to enter that program you have to bring a "care partner" a husband, a wife, a brother. That produces financial savings of one-third, besides the understanding of the way in which illness affects a family and the tremendous possibilities of affecting the illness by mobilizing the family.

There are two such hospitals in the United States. There are a lot of models that are available and that are applicable. It is not lack of good ideas; it is not lack of good models. Something else is interfering in the use of these models, in the use of this possibility, in implementation.

Chairman Miller. Anyone else?

Ms. Weiss. I would like to reinforce, I think, two things that Dr. Minuchin said. One of them is the notion that everything is predicated on individuals, and that really flies in the face of what we heard today about how people cope, and I think that is important to talk about. That there is a care partner is a way to enforce social altruism, caring for one another.

Chairman Miller. You need to pull that microphone a little bit closer to you.

Ms. Weiss. The second thing, it seems to me, is that I think a lot about the relationship between parents and professionals. I think we have evolved, at least in some places, so that it is no longer what I regard as a kind of one-way didactic relationship—where I am the expert and I am going to tell you what to do.

We have moved in a lot of programs to what, at least in their rhetoric, they refer to as partnership models—that I know as much about my kid as the expert, and what we are going to do is share and work out the best possible set of things we can do.

I think what the next step is, is a multilateral set of relationships—and I think that is exemplified in the hospital program that Dr. Minuchin just mentioned. That's multilateral relationships where we realize our support and our education not only comes from ourselves and from experts, but from peers and other people in our environment. So we have a variety of kinds of things we can bring to bear in terms of different kinds of crises. So that we are moving beyond both individual expert to parent or family, to more partnership relationships. And then more multilateral notions that acknowledge that the way that we get by is with help from a variety of sources. As the problems change, the sources of support may differ sometimes informal assistance will be enough, at other times mere formal intervention may be necessary.

I think moving toward those multilateral models is terrifically importantly if we are trying to stretch our limited resources to provide mere support and education to families.

Chairman Miller. Thank you.

Mr. Coats.

Mr. Coats. Mr. Chairman, before I ask my question I want to just again reiterate how valuable I think this hearing has been. What we have seen today is that there is a wide variety of research going on in different universities across the country on this subject. I think it is very important for us to bring it all together here in one place, and make it part of our record and part of our study. We really laid some groundwork for the kinds of policy questions that all of us are going to have to face when we deal with questions relating to our children, youth, and families.

What I would like to do with this panel is what I did with the last panel. I think all of you were here for that dialog which I thought was very constructive, in terms of this whole question of attitude versus socioeconomic factors—and I am not sure it is an either/or proposition.

But as I indicated in my question to the last panel, there does seem to be a rapidly emerging school of thought that says we just haven't paid enough attention to the attitude.

I am struck with a statement that was made in the Bill Moyers special on the "Black Family." When Moyers was talking with Caroline Wallace, a director of a inner city youth program, and he said—and I am paraphrasing here—"These things that you are saying, that is, that people have to take responsibility and attitudes have to change. Bill Moyers can't say these things, the Governor of New Jersey can't say these things, a white man can't say these things." She looked right back at him and said, "Why not? If you start saying them, and if I say them, and if we all start saying them, and everybody in their own corner starts saying them, it will become a drumbeat. And when that drumbeat starts beating, then maybe we can change some attitudes here."

I guess that leads to my question of this panel. What is your response to that question?

Mr. Carlson. I think it is true. In fact, I strongly agree that, shall we say, using the political pulpit, and the cultural pulpit, to drive home a stronger appreciation for family and for personal and individual responsibility, is very good. To borrow a line from C.S. Lewis, in the end he said, "Public life depends on private life." That is, the health of a political society depends on the health of the private society, of the private individuals, and the small institutions that exist out there.

And if those are not doing well, there is nothing that the public, the State, can do to put things right.

So I would affirm your statement there. I think to the degree to which, as I say, leadership can be applied in this direction—moral leadership—to a degree to which everyone from the President, to Members of the Senate, to Members of Congress, can set examples in their own lives, and can affirm the positive strengths of family life, the better off we will be.

Mr. Coats. Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson. I would just like to comment briefly about the financial issues. One of the things we found in our survey is that financial problems was the major stresser across the lifecycle for all couples and families. That is the thing they complain the most about.

But when we look at the amount of money they earned, what we saw that at any income level we had some families that seemed to cope much better with the financial issues, and others fought about it and didn't seem to cope with those issues.

In essence, we found there wasn't that much difference looking at income per se. It was how you dealt with the financial resources you had, No. 1. And, No. 2, how you worked that out among you and your relationship.

We found also that for some of those families, as they got more money, they got deeper in debt. That in essence what happens is your expectations changed as you get more money. But what you initially wanted and felt was sufficient when you have one income, dramatically changes when you get more income, even though that income hasn't come yet. It becomes a relationship issue then.

So that just looking at finances isolated from the way that a couple or a family deals with it, I think is unrealistic. Because even couples that make a great deal of money come for therapy, complaining about not having enough financial rsources. So it is a topic that is a problem for all couples and families.

The question you raised originally about whether a lot of these strengths are things that we can do something about and use—communication and skills around communication, conflict resolution, et cetera—there has been reviews of that literature recently that clearly demonstrate that most people benefit from skilled training programs . They can become more assertive. They learn how to be better listeners. But all of this information has shown that it doesn't necessarily improve the relationship.

You have to, in a sense, decide how you want to use that information. Skills can be taught, and I think they don't have to be taught by professionals. I think a lot of the things we are talking about, and a lot of the things that could be done in the area of strengths of families can be done by lay people, and it can be done by a broader network in what we traditionally consider to be helping professionals.

The idea—and the medical community more recently now—involving significant others, and treatment, is a move in that direction. There is more and more evidence showing that if you want to see more effective treatment, you need to involve the people—and this is for emotional problems or medical problems—you need to involve the people that are significant to that person in the treatment process somehow. Because they are going to help facilitate, or not facilitate, recovery process.

So the use of significant others—and that includes spouses, people you live with, but also kin and other people—is a significant resource that we haven't really used, to build strengths and relationships.

Dr. **Minuchin**. Medical expenses are spiraling. It is clear that if one does work with family medicine and one uses the family, there are all kinds of possibilities of reducing the cost of medicine. But if you do that you will have to create a support system in home care in medicine. If not, it will not work.

In Italy, in 1978, there was a law that closed psychiatric hospitals without any proviso that helped the families of the psychotic patients. They just wandered around Rome. It did not work. Support systems should have been created. There is no cheap fix for this kind of problem. And there is no way in which one way of doing it can produce results.

Of course, as you said, value systems are important. Of course. But then, who owns the microphone? If you are talking with me, I will receive what you tell me with my own schema of value systems. That is the question when you talk about value systems. I am quite certain that we would be sending different sermons. Which of us should be heard?

Chairman MILLER. Dr. Weiss.

Ms. WEISS. I was thinking about the Bill Moyers special a lot. I would be very interested if he had asked a different set of questions about how those families do cope, and gotten some sense of the networks and services in which they embedded. That is not to say that is an answer, but I think it would be a somewhat fuller picture than perhaps we got there. And certainly the lady at the end that was interviewed is an important part of that support system, saying the kinds of things that she is saying—I would be the first to say that.

I think the second thing that I feel very strongly is the importance of having different types of programs that cross-hatch communities. There need to be drop-in centers where women can get together—and fathers, for that matter—and talk about the problems of child rearing, get a little respite for an afternoon, or whatever—there also need to be programs with much more intensive services.

In one community where I spent a lot of time, Ithaca, NY, there are a variety of cross-hatching support and education programs. They are all very important, and they are funded by a variety of sources—some Government, some of them community, through United Way and those kinds of things. These grassroots efforts can and should be stimulated and leveraged by funding efforts at the Federal level and at the State level, as well as by local community donations.

I don't think that there is any one type of program that is going to solve all contemporary family problems. I also don't think that there ought to be, in the sense that to my mind what makes a lot of family support and education programs go is community ownership of them.

I worked with a group at Yale and in conjunction with the Family Resource Coalition to put together a volume of different kinds of programs to strengthen families. One of the things that I said in the introduction to that volume is, here are some ideas, we shouldn't be only replicating programs, we should be adapting them according to community needs. That is the spirit in which I think a lot of these programs need to evolve.

The Howard family research project has done a national survey of them. One of the biggest problems family support and education programs have is where is the money going to come from? You have a good program that lasts for a while, the money dries up, and it's gone. So it is that kind of long-term struggle for institutionalization of these programs. At this point these programs that strengthen families, that champion families, and provide a variety of supports need to get on the public agenda. No one source is going to provide the necessary wherewithal to sustain them. In fact, a lot of these programs now get by on very little wherewithal—they survive with help in donated time and have huge volunteer components. That may be sufficient for some of the mere informal low-budget efforts; it is not for higher risk families.

It is terrifically complicated but we need to think from a community level, what cross-hatch of programs do we need to strengthen different kinds of families? There are ways in which there is a Federal role for funding and visibility; for a variety of kinds of initiatives that will support those kinds of programs. There are State roles and there are also clearly local roles. I think that is the diversified kind of way in which we need to be thinking about the future of family support and education programs.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much for your time and your testimony. This is clearly not the end of our discussion of successful families and family traits. We appreciate your helping us get on the road here.

Thank you very, very much.

The committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:25 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record:]

JOURNAL OF FAMILY HISTORY,
CLARK UNIVERSITY,
Worcester, MA, February 28, 1986.

Hon. GEORGE MILLER,
Chairman, Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, House Office Building Annex 2, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. MILLER: I very much appreciated the opportunity to testify before your Committee, and the stimulating questions that you and Mr. Coats addressed to me and to other witnesses. I also learned a great deal from the testimonies of my colleagues. I am glad to see that your Committee is so hard at work to explore a diversity of points of view, in order to come to grips with what is actually happening to the American family.

The purpose of this letter is to correct a misrepresentation of my statement in the testimony, which was made on the part of Mr. Carlson from the Rockford Foundation. Mr. Carlson said that he disagreed with my claim that the way to deal with the current problem of families is to increase the welfare state. This is not what I said. My point was that even within the existing welfare state, one could achieve a more rational and integrated policy that would address the needs of the family as a unit, rather than precipitating further break-up of families.

Much of the debate following our testimony revolved around the questions of moral education and values vs. economic support for families. I think that this kind of dichotomy is unrealistic. I agree with Mr. Coats that it is very important to strengthen the moral values in the family, and to prevent family solidarity from being further eroded by increasing individualism, but at the same tiem, none of this moral education can be achieved without basic economic security protecting all people at all stages of the life cycle. Adequate child care facilities for working mothers, adequate health and nutrition programs for children, and adequate supports for the elderly, as well as families caring for older people, will not undermine the moral strengths of the family. On the contrary, such measures can provide a sound social and economic base, in which the family could better function as a moral unit.

I look forward to answering any further questions that you and other members plan to send in my direction. In the meantime, plese accept my congratulations for the sincere effort and hard work that this Committee engages in.

Sincerely,

TAMARA K. HAREVEN,
Professor of History.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY,
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES,
Manhattan, KS, February 26, 1986.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER,
Chairman, Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR SIR: Dan Coats requested in a letter of 20 February that I provide you with information on family strengths in accordance with several specific questions. I am glad to do so and regret that my attendance at the hearings on the 25th was not possible.

Question. What do you think are the most significant problems facing families today?

Answer. From the most general viewpoint, families are undergoing a transition from a situation in which roles, duties, and expections were relatively well defined and realistic to a situation in which roles and duties are "up for grabs" and expectations are much higher for more intense levels of companionship, with the additional factor of divorce being much more likely if expectations are not met. This leaves people not really sure what they want and inclined to terminate marriages when they feel that they are not as happy as they expected to be. As a consequence, several problems emerge.

(1) Marriage demands more flexibility and negotiation than before.

(2) Role conflicts and strain are more likely as people try to do too much or disagree about how much each person should do.

(3) While things are more difficult, spouses are often less inclined to "hang tough" and work things out, because the alternative of divorce is so readily available.

(4) The ways our parents solved marital problems are not sufficient in many cases to teach couples today how to resolve entirely new dilemnas associated with women working with preschool children, etc. At the same time, mere education is often too little and/or too late to make up for inadequate parental modeling.

From an economic viewpoint, I think couples expect a higher standard of living than their parents had and find that it takes two spouses working to approximate even the same standard. So, we have two people trying to do the work of three and something has to fall through the cracks somewheres, which in many cases is a reduction in the number of children (with long term societal implications) or in the quality of their care (with other long term societal implications).

Question. What are the primary family strengths you have observed in families that have enabled them to be successful?

Answer. Judd Swihart and I are working on a book that puts together a model of family strengths. The way in which we integrate them is unique and would take too long to present here. The strengths include:

(1) Time. Time spent together in a variety of supportive, enjoyable activities as opposed to being so tied up with work and children as to have no pleasant times with family members.

(2) Positiveness. Otherwise identified as appreciation in some models. Delivering a high level of positive reinforcement to family members, day in and day out, doing things that are positive from the other person's perspective, just for their sake, not merely as a strategy for "buying" their love, etc.

(3) Commitment. Being committed to building a good marriage and family, not merely staying together in terms of not getting divorced and being willing to adapt positively to change.

(4) Person esteem. Valuing oneself and other family members as worthy of lifelong commitments and one's support and appreciation.

(5) Openness. Being open to one's own needs and wants and willing to share them openly, while also being open to hearing and truly understanding the needs and wants of other family members. This is more than just having "good communication skills" but includes the desire to know oneself and be known and to know others.

(6) Value system. A value system that supports the other five areas, often provided within the context of an intrinsic religious faith (not merely a lip service adherence to a set of doctrines) or absorbed as a child by having been raised in such an environment.

Question. Do you have specific suggestions of what families can do to develop these strengths?

Answer. Our model discusses this in detail, but I am hesitant to discuss it lest someone else with more time than I take the ideas and "scoop" us on publication. In general, I am in favor of more premarital education and feel that families are doing what they can to read about improving their life, watching TV programs that deal with family issues, etc. To build such strengths takes real character and time.

Question. What books or articles would you recommend to those studying family issues?

Answer. This is a tough question for me. I have been involved in a great deal of study of research over the past six years and recognize that much of it is very poor in quality and much so oversimplifies the real world as to be useless to the average person. Much of the research in the family strengths area is far below average in quality for the family field of study in general. Many of the great names in the field, including many of your witnesses, upon investigation will be found to have professional training in areas other than family studies or family strengths, even though they are household names and outstanding speakers. You will find that many have published numerous books, but very few scholarly articles in the area of family. Even those that have done research have often relied upon biased samples that are not representative of Americans in general, so that their conclusions cannot be honestly applied to the general public without a substantial "leap of faith." You will find entire popular books written, based upon one or two samples of men or women in a church or two, somewheres in the U.S. You will find that ideology often dominates the perceptions of well known family scholars much more than any adherence to the findings of research. Another point to note is that many clinical specialists may overestimate the crisis families are in simply because they see so much pain on a daily basis, failing to remember that they are not seeing a random sample of the public but only the most distressed portion.

If only to serve as a counterpoint or gadfly to those who would list dozens of supposely solid books or articles, I shall decline at this point to do so, since I would be hesitant to find even a single book or article by one author (not including edited books with a variety of papers) that was empirically sound and wrriten by a family scholar.

Question. How important do you consider the father's role in the family to be? On what basis do you form your opinion?

Answer. I think his role is critical and becoming more so, as women leave more of the responsibility for child rearing to the father, as they return to work. I base this on personal opinion primarily because research that compares the effects of mothers and fathers on children often has been marred by a statistical problem known as multicollinearity. Usually father and mothers' attitudes are quite similar so that small differences can be blown out of proportion when statistics are used to ferret out the impact of the differences. The other problem is that the cultural bias that leads women to focus on family life more than men leads to situatuions in which family research has been biased towards a female perspective, making it difficult to get a fair evaluation of male contributions. More research has been done on mothers; when attempts are made to obtain father's data, more success is usually achieved in getting mothers to cooperate with the completion of the questionnaires, etc.; many of the terms are more difficult (less familiar) for fathers, so they misinterpret them more easily. In spite of these problems, I think it can fairly be said that the father has a critical role and there are many reviews of the literature which reach such a conclusion, particularly within the child development literature (I am more familiar with literature on marriage as opposed to parent-child relationships).

I have already sent in variety of papers on family strengths to Gene Sale, including a paper that puts together a model of family strengths. Gene, who is a staff member for your committee, I believe, should be able to provide you with them.

Thank you very much for your interest in family strengths. It is an important area of research with many potential policy and clinical implications.

I may be contacted at the phone number on the letterhead, regarding any questions.

Sincerely,

Walter R. Schumm, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor.

Prepared Statement of Dr. Walter R. Schumm, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS

Dear Committee Members, the area of family strengths is a refreshing change from the classical approach to studying what's wrong with families. I am certainly in favor of further emphasis and work in this area. However, I believe that the committee should be cautioned as well, however commendable the goals and comments of your other witnesses may or may not be.

It should be recognized that the research conducted to date in this area is strong in that it has been done in several cultures, with large numbers of families, and is very creative. However, it often has not been done with random samples of families ~~so~~ that we cannot tell for sure how applicable the results are to all families or to all types of families. Furthermore, most of the work in this area has consisted of listing whatever the author thinks are the key six, eight, or fifteen strengths, etc. Very few attempts have been made to link the strengths in any systematic or causal ordering; one attempt has been presented in a paper, "Beyond relationship characteristics of strong families; constructing a model of family strengths," published in Family Perspective, Volume 19, Number 1, 1985, pages 1-9. Figure 1 (Proposed Model of Family Strengths) is attached from page 3 of that paper by Dr. Schumm. I do not agree with all of the linkages in that model myself, but my attempt was to show what seemed to be implicit in much of Stinnett's previous work. Thirdly, while our theory about family strengths is at a primitive stage, our research analyses are not much better. One sees very few complex statistics used, for example; while complex statistics by themselves do not guarantee better research and may often confuse things hopelessly in some cases, they are often an indicator of how much work has gone on in an area, as researchers develop a feel for what variables to control for and how to organize variables in a systematic manner.

I think that the current research literature does support much of what is being said about family strengths, but it has yet to be organized in a coherent manner. Dr. Judd Swihart and I are currently working on such a project to be published hopefully in a book format but it is requiring a great deal of time, as most previous research has not been conceptualized along a positive, family strengths approach.

In conclusion, I would ask the committee to inquire of its witnesses of the empirical basis for their opinions and to challenge vigorously all witnesses in that regard lest you accept any proposed strength as a fact when in reality it is more personal or clinical opinion rather than empirical evidence. Even empirical evidence should be weighed carefully; the following articles have shown how badly done much of our current research in family studies has been done.

Schumm, W.R., Southerly, W.T., and Figley, C.R. "Stumbling Block or Stepping Stone: Path Analysis in Family Studies." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1980, 42 (May), 251-262.

Schumm, W.R. "Integrating Theory, Measurement, and Statistical Analysis in Family Studies Survey Research." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1982, 44 (November), 983-998.

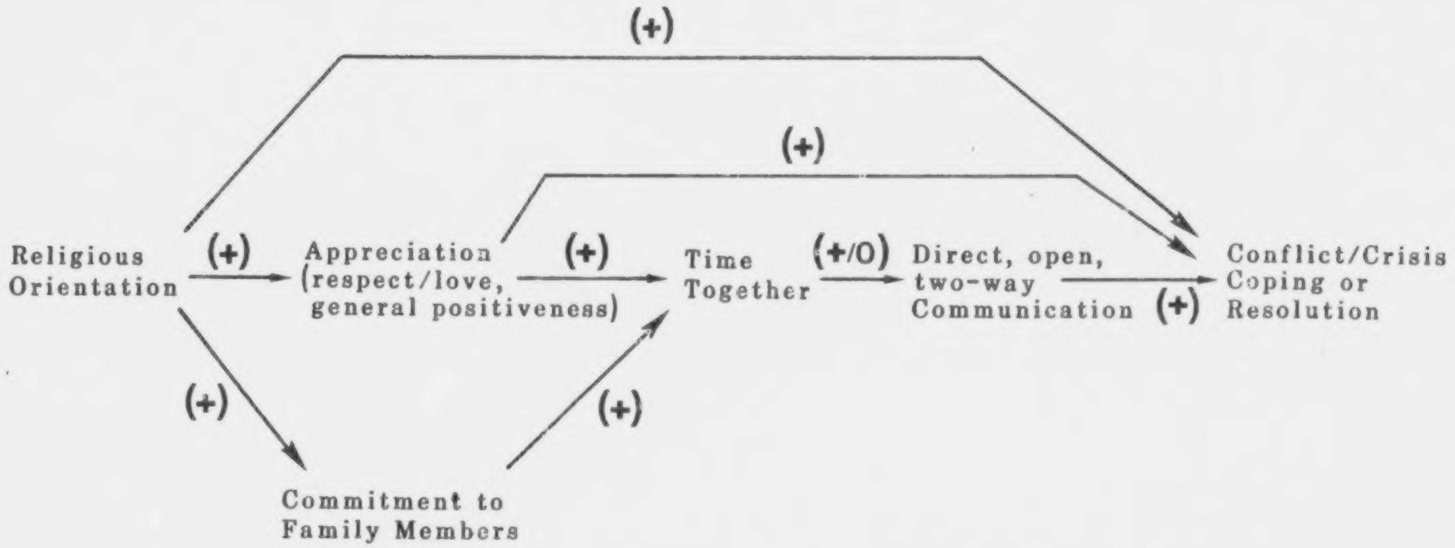
(+)
(+)
Religious Orientation
(+)
Appreciation (respect/love, general positiveness)
(+)
Time Together
(+/O)
Direct, open, two-way Communication
(+)
Conflict/Crisis Coping or Resolution
(+)
Commitment to Family Members
(+)

FIGURE 1. Proposed Model of Family Strengths

TRAITS OF A HEALTHY FAMILY,
Littleton, CO, February 26, 1986.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN COATS: Thank you for your letter. I regret my reply must be succinct because I am preparing to leave for Germany to work with American military families. In response to your questions:

1. Most significant problems facing families today?

Ecomomics; inability to recognize and name strengths lack of institutional support/interest; low self-esteem due to society's using a structural rather than a relational definition of the strong family; some single parent families are healthier than some dual-parent families; some dual career families are healthier than some traditional families; when we adopt a structural definition, we are denying these families the realization that they can be healthy in spite of structure; this causes massive low self-esteem; inability to resolve conflicts effectively.

2. Primary family strengths: see attached.

3. Specific suggestions of what families can do to develop these strengths:

a. Assuming family is strong.—Teaching families to prioritize these strengths as they perceive them; share their perceptions; use their strengths to shore up voids and weaknesses and to address their stresses. This is easy to do. I conduct workshops on it with good success. Common reaction: "We're better than we thought! We have more skills than we figured we had. We feel much better about ourselves and our ability to deal with problems." Overcomes that low self-esteem in #1.

b. Assuming family is in crisis.—Signifying to families that all families are healthy in some ways so that they don't start with zero. Even the Moyer's black mothers have strengths and coping skills: a strong sense of maternal kinship; trust in their mothers; realization that problems do not mean failures; take these strengths and use them by teaching these women how to change the next generation by instilling a stronger sense of responsibility, morals, respect, and communication. It can be done.

A study on parenting education efforts quoted in Journal of Marriage and Family indicated that the Black married mothers surveyed wanted parenting education: from their church rather than any other institution; wanted child care during sessions; wanted to form a support group over pure information; and wanted their husbands to attend. We can work together to achieve this kind of program.

But we also need to realize that many white upper-middle class religious families are in crisis. It may be a different crisis than Moyer's women but it's there and we need to address the stresses of economics, time management, children, and the couple relationship with these families, particularly changing value and role systems—how to understand and grow together through them.

4. Mine, of course (no humility here): Traits of a Healthy Family and Stress and the Healthy Family. Both have rather complete biliographies. I also see the need for video tapes like Dobson's, John Powell's, and others. I am enclosing a brochure on some recent ones of mine.

As far as my personal efforts go, I am spending a good deal of professional time in staff education, helping church, school, hospital, military, and social agency staffs to work with parents more effectively. This is a forgotten area. We expect overworked institutional people like pastors, teachers, chaplains and social workers to teach parents/families effectively but we give them little training in attracting parents to good programs, keeping them there, meeting their needs, and building support groups.

I believe this is the most crucial area to address now. Once the professionals who include parents as part of their population understand better methodology and develop skills to meet parents' needs, our family education programs will be more effective. I have developed a program called "Working with Parents" which I teach practically every week to some staff and it is warmly received. I plan to write a book on this eventually.

A final thought: I believe a present popular attitude that the family is dying is injurious to both our families and our culture. Throughout history whenever there has been significant change in the family structure, this fear has been broadcast. Its cost is enormous. Young couples are afraid to commit themselves to marriage and, married couples to children because of this myth. I believe it's time to turn the attitude around, saying: "Hey, marriage and family are good and possible to achieve. We aren't dying. We are changing and change always brings stresses previous generations didn't face. Let's look at our skills and resources instead of our failures and weaknesses."

Hope this is what you want. I will be out of the country until March 28.

Sincerely,

DOLORES CURRAN.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GERALD P. REGIER, PRESIDENT, FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL OF AMERICA, INC., WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony to your committee about the strength and diversity of America's families. I also want to applaud your efforts to focus attention on this important subject.

I represent the Family Research Council, a social policy research, education, and resource organization which believes that the family is the strength and stabilizing force of our culture. The real backbone of our organization is a network of more than 500 researchers and family-serving professionals who represent a wide variety of academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, psychiatry, history, law, pediatrics, social work, child development, and family counseling. In fact, several of your panelists (Drs. Stinnett, Rekers, Olson, and Carlson) are part of this network. You will be interested to know that our organization will hold its annual network conference June 12-14 at George Washington University. I hope that your committee members and staff will be able to take part in some of our sessions.

As any student of contemporary American culture can tell you, the American family is experiencing a period of great turmoil. During the last two decades, we have witnessed alarming increases in divorce, family violence, teen pregnancy and suicide, single parent households, adolescent drug use, and other problems. These problems have adversely affected the vitality and stability of American family life.

In spite of these discouraging trends, some families in America today are not only surviving—but thriving. I believe that we can learn a lot from these families. Indeed, I hope that the example of these strong families will encourage us to implement public policies and private programs which uphold the family unit and recognize its intrinsic value to American society.

I am pleased that your committee has solicited input on this subject from some of our nation's leading scholars on family strengths. I believe that the research findings provided by Drs. Stinnett, Rekers, Olson and Carlson have provided an excellent framework for my testimony on family strengths.

While I do not intend to reiterate their finding, I do want to call to your attention Carle Zimmerman's classic research study, The Family and Civilization (1947). This classic work is now out-of-print and with the gracious permission of the publisher I would like to submit the entire book for inclusion in the record. Zimmerman, who traced the role of the family in Western history from 1500 B.C. to the 20th Century A.D., concluded that family and civilization are intricately linked such that change in one is associated with change in the other. In addition, he observed that the two primary agents of social change—the church and government—often vie with the family for control over its members.

Zimmerman's study identified three basic family typologies:

(1) *Trustee Families* in which members are trustees of the family name. The family itself is immortal, and the family head wields absolute authority. There is no divorce, but a spouse can be repudiated for failing to support the group.

(2) *Domestic Families* in which a balance exists between familialism and individualism. The state shares power with the family, and divorce is uncommon.

(3) *Atomistic Families* in which individualism replaces familialism leading to widespread hedonism and moral degeneration. Marriage is only a contract, not a sacrament.

The cycle of change proceeds rather predictably. The trustee family, carrying the seeds of its own destruction, promotes the accumulation of wealth, productive work, and the subservience of spouse and other family members. When this results in abuse, intervention by the government or church attempts to stimulate the constructive interaction typified by the domestic family.

The domestic family is the most desirable family type because it has the greatest potential for healthy development. The domestic family maintains a balance between individualism and group support and reflects both strong commitment and mutual goals. It embodies the characteristics of strong families identified in the research done by Drs. Stinnett and Olson, and does not foster its own destruction.

Atomistic families are both the cause and effect of decay. Under individual hedonism, the family cannot carry out its basic functions because the individual no longer sacrifices for the family. The subsequent confusion produces divorce, delinquency, increased dependence on public assistance, and other problems. There are only two possible outcomes: (1) further alienation and anomie, or (2) many members of society recognize the deterioration and try to avoid it, causing polarization and the emergence of new leadership and a vastly different view of the family.

Zimmerman perceived the 1970s to be a period in which the Atomistic Family would be dominant, and he predicted that the 1980s would see a return to the time-tested principles and traditional values that have guided domestic families for centuries.

I believe the return to traditional family values that Zimmerman projected is beginning to take place within our society. "Family" has become a buzz word around which successful advertising and political campaigns are built. Family-oriented television programs—such as the Cosby Show and Family Ties—are topping the Neilsen ratings. Many advocates of social change through government programs during the 60s and 70s are now calling for greater parental responsibility in solving family problems.

I believe we can capitalize on this renewed interest in family life and reverse many of the cultural trends which are causing problems for so many families. To do so, I believe the government must recognize the normative model which stimulates the most effective family life—the two-parent, heterosexual domestic family. To base family policy on some other normative model (or none at all) will only result in further deterioration and failure.

This in no way means that government should abandon all assistance for other households—it just means that policy makers need a common understanding of what structure facilitates strong family life, and they need a measuring stick to gauge the impact various proposed policies have on the stability of the family unit. For example, basing policy on a normative model might prevent the perpetuation of welfare policies which require fathers to be absent for families to receive benefits. It would also not allow AFDC payments to teen mothers who are in "unformed families" (where the father never made a marriage commitment) unless they live with their parents.

Aside from identifying and implementing this normative model, we must draw upon the family strengths data to develop private sector programs which stimulate the development of strong families. Initiatives which emphasize the importance of the father's role would be particularly helpful in preventing the kinds of problems that Dr. Rekers identified in his testimony.

Government can also have a significant role in strengthening families by altering the tax code to make it more favorable to families with dependents and to full-time mothers who care for their children. In addition, government can strengthen families by giving parents greater responsibility for dealing with family issues and problems. For example, current policies which permit teenagers to obtain birth control counseling and contraceptives without parental consent or notification should be eradicated.

In summary, let me express my hope that the family strengths data will provide the framework around which future public policy is developed. While a compassionate society must take care of the unfortunate victims of the Great Society experiment, we must seize the opportunity to develop a more preventative approach to dealing with family problems.

["Family and Civilization," Carle C. Zimmerman, Harper & Row, New York and London 1947, is retained in committee files.]

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